THE
INTERPRETERS SERIES

JUGO-SLAV STORIES

DITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
PAVLE POPOVIC

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THE INTERPRETERS' SERIES

JUGO-SLAV STORIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL
AND EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

PAVLE POPOVIC
Professor at the University of Belgrade

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JUGO-SLAV STORIES

PRONUNCIATION OF SERBIAN LETTERS

C as ts in lots.

J as y in yet.

Lj as l in million (Italian gl in egli).

Z as s in pleasure (French j in jour).

INTRODUCTION

When I was very kindly asked to prepare a short Anthology of modern Serbian fiction I felt very much at a loss. It was in the month of May 1919 and I was in Paris attending the Peace Conference and at the very height of my work in the Press Division of the Serbian Delegation.

How was it possible to prepare an Anthology at a time so unfavorable for literary work? The greatest difficulty of all was to find the necessary books. I had none with me and my countrymen who had come to the Conference and who had taken the greatest pains to have on hand statistical reports and maps had never thought of bringing any works of pure literature. There were none in the libraries of Paris and they would have to be sent from Belgrade. But even this was not altogether practical for almost all the Public Libraries in Serbia, as well as most of the private ones, were destroyed and pillaged by the enemy during the war and many Serbian books which ordinarily could have been very easily obtained had for that reason become extremely rare. Besides where could translators be found, for there are very few English speaking people who understand and read Serbian. My task was clearly a difficult one and yet

I was asked to work rapidly so that the book might be published in a few months—and it had to be done.

Under these conditions I have not been able to make quite the same selection of stories as I should have done before the war. When an anthology of Serbian stories is brought before the American public for the first time it should represent all of the best things that Serbian literature has produced in that kind of work. Unfortunately I did not succeed in securing the works of all the Serbian writers of fiction especially those of some of the younger men whose work I particularly regret that I have been obliged to omit since much of it shows great freshness, originality and vigor.

However, the authors who appear in this anthology are all excellent and the stories we have gathered together are the finest that a number of our best authors have produced.

"The First Matins With My Father" is perhaps the greatest story in our collection. Lazar Lazarovich (1851-1890) still stands first among Serbian story tellers, though there have been many men of talent since his day. He is great in every way and although he only wrote a dozen short stories each one is a little masterpiece. Each is a true picture of life, a vigorous piece of characterization, a model of construction and written moreover in a most correct and expressive literary style.

Lazarovich was born an artist. He had the artistic

instinct, the sense of proportion and of harmony in a very high degree and he added to these gifts the serious study of life, manners and character. He knew thoroughly the life of the Serbian peasant and of the small towns for he was born in the country and became a district medical officer, which brought him into close contact with the peasants for many years. It is really a very great loss that he should have died while still so young a man and that he did not have more leisure to devote to literary work.

In the story which we are discussing it is worth noticing with what skill in climax, care in detail and yet with what simplicity in tone and handling the story of a gambler is told. There are no detailed analyses, no minute descriptions and no long drawn out and tiresome bits of narrative. The life of a gambler is not displayed in the full glare of midday. You do not know what the hero himself thinks or feels at each stage of the story, nor do you see the gambling companions who surround him. The whole story is seen from afar, from one corner of the background and in a very personal light. The life of the gambler is told by one who is not a gambler himself, by a child—and there are many childlike qualities in his narrative. We rather receive the impression that a drama is being enacted than watch the drama and its incidents themselves. This results in simplifying the plot into a short and vivid narrative and makes a

short story which contains an entire novel. Even the great scene itself, the fatal night of the gambling, is not given as a whole. You only hear a few words at the end of it. You only see what you can make out through the keyhole of the door in a few seconds filled with the fear of being caught. Nevertheless it is as clear and as broadly drawn as if we had been present at every incident at the gaming table during the whole night. The final scene is intensely dramatic and entirely unexpected. When you read the first sentence of the story which is so simple and promises so little, you would never imagine that in a few pages it could develop such dramatic effects.

The other story by Lazarovich "At The Well" is as good as the one we have just discussed. It is hard to tell which of the two is the better. The last is the equal of the first in every way and probably surpasses it in elegance of form. It is dramatic and touching in the highest degree and perfect in style, colour, care for detail and composition.

It may perhaps be necessary to explain the surroundings in which this story takes place. There is in Serbia a very ancient institution called a "Ladruga," an association made up of many families of the same origin. The head of the family lives there with his sons and his daughters, their wives and husbands and children. These children when they reach the proper age also marry and their children stay in

the family even when their turn comes to be married. This entire world is like one family and no member of it separates himself from it to found his own household. The oldest member is the head and also the ruler and if he is very old he is helped by one or two of those nearest his own age. He is greatly honoured and respected by all the members of the Association. A complete hierarchy exists among them and every one according to his age and ability exercises his rights and does his share in the Association. The youngest ones have a limited sphere of rights and duties and are directly under those who are older than themselves and only very rarely and exceptionally do they have anything to do personally with the head of the Association.

The second story in the book, "Kanjosh Macedonovich," is by Stjepan Mitrov Ljubisa (1821-1878) a writer without very much training but with a great deal of talent. It is simple and charming. It is really a kind of fairy story, the tale of a merchant who gets the better of a brigand, of a dwarf who conquers a giant, of a Serbian David who overcomes an Italian Goliath. That is what the story of Kanjosh really is and though it borders doubtless on the myth, the legend and the fairy tale, yet this fantastic story is transformed into a vivid picture of reality through the natural, straightforward narrative of the author. Poor Kanjosh, honest and unsophisticated, is the true

son of a free mountain country, upright and simple, with a great deal of common sense and a very clear and vigorous sense of justice. He is thrown suddenly into the midst of a decadent and vicious society, among spies and cowards who pretend to be brave to gain prestige, and scoundrels who, according to circumstances, either assume airs of uprightness and dignity or prostrate themselves before you as humble suppliants and flatterers. This gives the material for these scenes of comedy which are drawn with so much spirit and talent. The straightforward narrative with its plot of true comedy is written in a simple and condensed but supple and lively style, and in picturesque and idiomatic language.

I do not suppose that it will be necessary to give a long historical and geographical explanation to make the American public enjoy the story. I might merely say that the little Serbian state of Pastrovich is on the shore of the Adriatic just south of Dalmatia and to the east of the Bocce di Cattaro. After the break-up of the Serbian Empire when the Adriatic coast was conquered by the Venetian Republic, this little Serbian state, though under the suzerainty or protection of that republic, still enjoyed a certain autonomy and some rights of which the other Venetian subjects on the Dalmatian coast were deprived. Still the Republic of St. Mark put all kinds of difficulties in the path of its pretended protégé and obviously tried to

exploit it and to take away its liberties. Our story, which is indeed founded on an historical narrative of the XV Century, gives a faithful picture of the relations between the Venetian Republic and the Serbian people of the period. Perhaps the American reader may also see a symbol of what may be the relations between Italians and Serbs in the near future along this same Adriatic shore.

The third story "Vidosava Brankovich" is, I must frankly admit, not quite so well written. Its style has a touch of rather banal romanticism and of bombast and yet possesses a certain poetic quality. The author, Zmaj-Jovan Jovanovich (1833-1904), is one of the best Serbian lyric poets, and although lyric poets are rarely good short-story writers it cannot be denied that they put a certain poetic quality into everything they write. There is real pathos in the sorrowful story of the family on which the curse of the people rests. There is poetry in the mysterious and lugubrious refrain which appears and reappears in the story from time to time. It has also one unforgettable moment—the dream of the mythical young girl on the eve of her wedding. You can not thoroughly understand this tragic story unless you recall the battle of Kossova (1389) which determined the fate of the mediaeval Serbian Empire that had flourished for many centuries. There the Turks conquered the Serbs who lost their independence. Popular Tradition and

the national epics have always been disposed to attribute that catastrophe to treason and to name as the traitor Vuk Brankovich, one of the most powerful Serbian nobles of the period. Our poet has chosen to show the last descendants of Vuk's family, the blunt old man Urosh Brankovich and his young daughter the mystical Vidosava, as the principal characters in the story. It is Vuk's crime that these two, in spite of their innocence and their virtues, are forced to expiate.

"The First Furrow" by Milovan Glisich (1827-1908) is a very short and simple story. Glisich is really a humorist and his stories and plays have a great deal of life and brilliant local colour but occasionally he liked to write serious stories and this tale is one of them. It is only a sketch, a mere outline, nothing at all really, yet it is truly touching. At the period that we are passing through to-day this story becomes symbolic. There are many unhappy women in Serbia widowed by the war and left with little children like the heroine of our story. In a few years they too will see their children grow up and reach the age when they can be useful and plough their first furrow in that earth which, thereafter, they will cultivate by their own strength. Our story, even though it was written thirty years ago, is symbolic of the next Serbian generation which will certainly rebuild their devastated fatherland.

"The Curse" is the best story of Janko Veselino-

vich (1862-1905) a young man of great talent, originality and vigour who heedlessly dissipated his strength and his youth and died prematurely. He was at first merely a village schoolmaster but later held a small government post at Belgrade.

This story shows us a thoroughly patriarchal world and one which has long ago ceased to exist with its tribunal which held its sessions under an old oak, its honest but despotic authorities and unquestioned submission to those in the authority, its profound respect for ancient customs and manners and a superstitious belief in the efficacy of the curse. Above all, respect for the "Kum" is what this world most vigorously observed. The Kum is the witness or groomsman and later on the Godfather of the children who result from the marriage at which he has assisted. He was always considered as a member of the family and was held in particular respect by all its members. All homage to him! If it was he who launched a curse upon you, Beware! You may be sure that every evil will fall upon your head. Even to-day the Kum enjoys much prestige in the family but in those older times his authority was really very great.

Veselinovich is not, like Lazarovich, a consummate artist and he lacks his qualities of style but still he touches a very high level in "The Curse." The little disagreement between two estimable people develops logically and clearly and the situation becomes big

with dramatic and pathetic consequences of the highest import. If he is not a great artist Veselinovich nevertheless has real power.

The two stories which follow; "Povereta" and "Hodja Saleek," are among the best written by Simo Matavulya (1852-1908) and Svetozar Corovich (1875-1918). The first story is laid in Dalmatia where Matavulya was born and the second in Herzegovina the fatherland of Corovich. Dalmatia and Herzegovina are two ancient Serbian states which as a result of the late war have been reunited to the mother country. Dalmatia is the Adriatic coast, in the southerly part of which lies Pastrovich described in "Kanjosh Macedonovich." The northern part, to which the Dalmatian archipelago belongs, is the scene of the story by Matavulya. Herzegovina is the back country of the coast south of Bosnia. Both of those countries are west of Serbia proper. The inhabitants are however as Serbian as the Serbs of Serbia. Among them are a few Mohammedans and one of these is shown in Hodja Saleek, the principal character in Corovich's story.

These two stories of Matavulya and Corovich, have a great deal of local colour. The first shows us the impoverished, simple and naive world of the deep sea fisherman, very catholic and very bigoted in its faith. The world of the second story is just as simple, naive and archaic bu tit is a Mohammedan world.

The stories are both realistic in their treatment and remarkable for their picturesqueness and their truth to life. They are rather impressions than stories and hold our interest more by their picture of the life they describe than by any interest in the plot. The first has a certain amount of dramatic quality, the second is remarkable for its humour and wit.

We have concluded our collection with another story by Veselinovich,—"Eternity," not because this author and Lazarovich are the only ones who deserve to be represented by two examples of their work but because we wished to include one story which was fundamentally a folk story and one which, told here by a Serbian man of letters, still lives in the popular tradition of our country. There is a legend that tells of an emperor who was very virtuous and was allowed to ascend into Heaven for a moment. He did not perceive that he stayed more than three hundred years, but when he came back to his country he was astonished to find everything changed and entirely new people there, who did not know him. A Serbian book of the sixteenth century tells how a monk, walking in the garden of his convent, was struck by the marvellous song of a little bird he had never before seen. When the song was over he wanted to go back into the convent but found a wall where had been the door by which he had gone out. When finally he got back to the convent he found there a generation of monks whom he

did not know and discovered that three hundred and forty years had passed in his absence. In an old Serbian manuscript of the middle ages it is related that the Prophet Jeremiah charged Abimelech to go out of Jerusalem to pick some figs in the country nearby. He did so, but before getting back he felt tired and, lying down to rest under a tree, fell asleep. When he awoke he hurried back with his basket of figs but was greatly astonished to find the city of Jerusalem ruined, sacked and without inhabitants. There was no trace of Jeremiah of whom he vainly sought tidings. At last it was explained to him that he had slept under his tree for four hundred and twenty-six years and that during that time the Emperor of Babylon had stormed and sacked the city and made prisoners of all the inhabitants. There are indeed many other stories of the same sort. This particular legend is widely known in our country, and appears in many popular ballads and many old manuscripts. The American reader will quickly realize that this is at bottom the same legend as that of Rip Van Winkle.

But our story as it is told by Veselinovich has combined with it another idea foreign to the original legend and which has no intrinsic connection with it. It is the story of a crime, a mysterious murder, which makes the version of Veselinovich less clear and logical than the other Serbian versions of the story.

These are the Serbian stories which we introduce

to the American public for the first time. I trust that they may have a warm welcome. They deserve it not only because they come from a friendly country which has shown such heroism during the great war but also because they have such real literary value. If they should be gladly welcomed by American readers this will be largely due to the translators, who have done their best to give a true rendering of these stories, which are frequently very difficult to interpret, and to show clearly the spirit which inspires them. The principal merit however is due to the American publisher who first had the idea of bringing out this book and who has made a great effort to realize it.

PAVLE POPOVIC

Belgrade,
Feb. 1920.

THE FIRST MATINS WITH MY FATHER

By Lazar Lazarovich

Lazar Lazarovich was born in 1851 at Labach, (Serbia), a town which was completely destroyed in 1914 during the great war. He completed his law course at Belgrade and then his medical course at Berlin and was a practicing physician throughout his life, first in the country and then in Belgrade. He was elected a corresponding member of the Serbian Royal Academy.

Lazarovich was the author of a dozen short stories which aroused the most immense enthusiasm among the public and founded the realistic school of Serbian fiction. He died in 1890.

THE FIRST MATINS WITH MY FATHER

By Lazar Lazarovich

I was only nine years old at the time. I don't remember the exact details of what happened, so I can only tell you what I recall. My sister who is older than I am remembers too, but my younger brother, on the contrary, knows nothing about it. I was never fool enough to tell him.

When I was grown up, I questioned my mother, who told me many things about the affair. My father, naturally, never breathed a word.

He, my father, was of course always dressed as a Turk. I can still see him putting on his clothes. He wore a short under vest of red velvet edged with several rows of gold braid, and over that a green cloth jacket. Behind his belt, which was stamped in gold, he stuck a thin walking stick with an ivory top and a dagger with silver scabbard and ivory handle. A fringed sash, tied on the left side, covered the belt. His trousers were ornamented with silk braid and embroidery, huge flaps hung half way down his legs, and he wore white stockings and flat shoes. A Tunisian fez, worn a little over the left ear, served as headgear. He carried in his hand an ebony pipe with an

amber mouthpiece, and stuck in his sash on the right side was a tobacco pouch embroidered in gold and false pearls. He was a real dandy.

His disposition was peculiar, and though it is true that he was my father, since I have started to tell the story, there is no use in lying about it. He was extremely severe, he always commanded, and if his orders, given once for all, were not immediately executed, there was nothing left for you to do but to escape as fast as possible. Passionate and forcible, he required that everything should be done in his way; in short, no one dared to have the audacity to contradict him. When he was really angry, he would blaspheme the *Allelulia.* He never gave but one blow, but my dear fellow, you were on the ground as soon as you were hit! He was easily offended; when he scowled, bit his lower lip, and twisted his moustache, turning up the ends, his eyebrows joined across his forehead, and his black eyes gleamed. Woe, if at that moment someone came to tell him that I did not know my lesson. I don't know why I was so afraid. He might have boxed my ears once. But his eyes made me shiver, and when he turned them on you like a bullet from a sling, you would begin to tremble like an apple twig, without rhyme or reason.

He never laughed, at least never like other people. I remember one day, when he was holding my little

brother on his knee. He had given the child his watch to play with, and Djokica insisted on jamming the watch into his mouth and yelling like one possessed because he couldn't open it. My sister and I almost died of laughing, and the thing seemed amusing even to my father, for he several times partly opened his mouth on the left side and his face wrinkled at the corner of his left eye. This was an extraordinary event, and was his way of laughing at a thing which would have made anyone else roar so that they could be heard at the Inn of Tetreb.

I remember the day that my uncle died, Papa's brother and partner, whom he cared for deeply. My aunt, my mother, my cousins, all of us children sobbed and groaned, with tears and lamentations, all, all, crying aloud. But Papa never faltered, he did not shed a tear, or even say an "Oh" of pain. Only as he went out of the house his lower lip trembled nervously and he shivered. He was white as linen and supported himself against the doorway, but he did not open his lips.

Even at the risk of his head, he would never go back on what he had said, though the thing might be required by his conscience. I remember the day that he dismissed his clerk, Proka. I saw clearly that he hated doing it, and that he was sorry for the man, but he did not give in. He liked Proka better than any of the other clerks. I remember that he had never

struck him but once when, after drawing some brandy, Proka had closed the spigot so badly that almost the value of a keg had flowed away. Except that one time he had never laid a finger on him. He trusted him in everything, even sending him to the village to collect the money for things that had been sold on credit, and things like that. And why do you suppose he sent Proka away? For no reason at all! Just because he had seen him gambling for pennies!

But wait, you will soon be still more astonished!

It was near the feast of St. George. Proka came into the shop to have his agreement renewed. Papa took ninety groschen out of his pocket and said, "Here is your money. I have no more need of you. Go and find a place where you can gamble for pennies." Proka, holding his fez before his eyes, and shedding a veritable rain of tears, began to plead for pardon. I could see that my father was touched, but do you think he yielded?

He only pulled another ducat out of his pocket and gave it to Proka, saying, "Take this, and get out." Proka left, and my father inwardly repented having dismissed, without cause, the most useful of his clerks.

He never joked, either with us his children, or with my mother or with anyone else. He had a curious manner of treating my mother.

God forbid that it should be said that he was like

some men who beat their wives, and do other things of that kind, but he was cold and churlish with my mother — worse than a stranger, he really was. Whereas my mother, good as any saint, brooded over him with her eyes as an ostrich does over her eggs. When he spoke harshly, and her tears choked her, she always hid them, not only from us but from him. He never went out with her, and she did not dare open her mouth to ask him to take her anywhere.

He would not tolerate any suggestions from her about the shop or about his business.

One day she said to him:

"Mitar, why don't you give any brandy to Stanoje? There will soon be plenty of the new, and where will you put it?"

He only answered this by shouting:

"Are you hungry, or do you need anything? The money is in your hands, if it gives out you have only to say so. But don't meddle with my affairs."

My mother bowed her head and was silent.

He talked very little with anyone. His group of friends met at the café, and it was only with them that he said a few words. He had a great respect for his partner, Ilija, the only man who ever spoke frankly to him, and of whom my father was, in a certain way, a little afraid.

It could be seen that he loved us, his children, and my mother, but he held us under very severe control.

I do not remember to have ever received any mark of affection from him. It is true that at night, he tucked us in again when we were uncovered, and he would not let us lean over the well or climb the mulberry trees, but what did that mean to me? Other fathers did as much, and also brought their children candy and gold paper and balls that bounced as high as the poplar trees.

He went to church only on the feast of St. George, but to the café he went every night. We had supper, and immediately after it he put his chibouk under his left arm, his tobacco pouch in his belt, and behold he was gone! In summer he came back at nine o'clock, and in winter even earlier, though sometimes midnight had struck before he was at home.

This troubled my poor mother and sister, but I at that time knew nothing of what such revelry meant. They never went to sleep before my father's return even if he did not get back until dawn. Sitting up in their beds they dared not even light a candle. He went into a rage at once, you see, if he found one burning. One day when he had come in I heard him growl.

"What is the meaning of that candle burning at such an hour?"

"It is so that you can see to undress, Mitar," said my mother.

"Do you think that I don't know how to light a candle, or that I am too drunk to find one?"

"But no, Mitar," said my mother, soothingly, "I only thought——"

"You thought what? You wanted the neighbours to think that there was a corpse in the house!"

A corpse! Do you imagine for a moment that he meant that? He who cared so little about the neighbours? He merely did not want my mother to pay any attention to his goings and comings, and in his anger he did not know what to accuse her of. He would have preferred finding my mother asleep, or if she must lie awake, that he should at least be able to go on a spree without having any fuss made about it. That evidently irritated him.

He drank very little, and then only wine. When he had to taste the brandy that he bought, he always spit it out at once, making a grimace.

He cared no more, and God knows how little that was, for coffee. You ask me "What did he do all night in the café?"

It was a bad thing, that was what it was. It seems to me that if he had drunk hard it would have done only half as much harm. But you will see.

It shortened my mother's life by half. Sometimes she cried and choked, but she never complained to anyone.

One day he came home very late. Nothing hap-

pened. Again the next day, nothing. Do you suppose, my dear fellow, that my mother did not know that he no longer had a watch! At last the poor woman asked him, "Where is your watch, Mitar?"

He frowned, and turning away his eyes, answered.

"I have sent it to Belgrade to be repaired."

"But it went quite well, Mitar."

"I suppose that I am neither one-eyed nor an idiot, and that it is probable that I know whether a watch goes well or not."

What could my mother do? She was silent, but later she said to my sister with tears, "This is very hard on me, he will throw away everything that we possess, and in my old age I shall have to live by washing other people's shirts."

Another time it was barely ten o'clock, when he suddenly returned from the café.

An astrachan cap was cocked over one ear, a chain as thick as your finger hung across his breast, and a pistol encrusted with gold and precious stones was stuck in his belt. He came in, and from the look of the few wrinkles around his left eye, he seemed to be in a good enough humor.

As soon as he was in the house, he pulled out his watch, as if to see what time it was.

"You have come back?" said my mother, waking with a start. "And is your watch repaired?"

"It is repaired."

"And what is that chain?"

"It is a chain, like any other chain," he answered in a quiet voice, without shouting.

"I know that," said my mother, "but where did you get it?"

"I bought it."

"And that cap? Only Mica the treasurer has one like it."

"I bought that also."

"He sold it to you?"

"He sold it."

"And what . . . ?"

But here my father looked at my mother in a certain manner, and she was silent.

He began to undress. I risked an eye outside of my coverlid.

He took out of his pocket a package as big as my fist, and tossed it onto the table, where it rang; nothing less than ducats, my dear fellow.

"Here, keep this," he said, and went into the kitchen.

My mother took up the paper between two fingers—as you might say—the way that she would have lifted dirty linen.

"What shall I do with this money?" she asked my sister. "It is accursed. It is from the devil, and the devil will take it back in the same way that he has given it."

As you see there was neither life nor happiness in this thing. My mother was unhappy, and we were unhappy with her.

My mother has told us that he was formerly quite a different sort of man, and I remember myself, as if in a dream, that when I was tiny he held me on his knee, and that he made me a whistle out of a reed, and took me with him in the cart out into the fields. "But," said my mother, "after he began to go with the treasurer Mica, Krosta who lives in Makevie Street, Albert the druggist, and a few others, everything was upside down, and went crookedly."

He grew cross, and would allow no questions, always saying, "Mind your own affairs," or "Have you nothing else to worry about?"

He was good at nothing, and as I have told you he realized that what he was doing was wrong, but that which had taken possession of him, and from which God preserve us, would not let him go.

And yet, though it seems absurd to say it, he was really a fine man. Yes, by the Lord he was! But . . .

One day when he came home he was not alone! My mother was surprised. He passed by the door with someone and they were whispering together. They went into the courtyard. Then we heard the neighing and stamping of a horse. I did not know what it meant.

When he came in later I began to snore and my

sister pretended to be asleep. He said good evening, and nothing more. Both he and my mother were silent, and as for me, I waited. At last my mother said in a choked voice.

"He has taken the black horse!"

"He has taken him."

Again they were silent, but my mother blew her nose several times, and I thought that she was crying.

"Mitar, for the love of God, and in the name of our children here, stop this traffic with the devil. The man who leagues himself with him is damned in this world and the next. Look what happened to Jovan who gambled with cards, think of him! A man of his position, who has sunk until to-day he must pick up nutgalls for other people, and buy skins in the villages for the Jews. For the love of God, have you no pity for me. who when I grow old will have to seek my crust of bread in the houses of others, or these children of ours who will have to serve strangers?" And she began to sob.

"What's the matter with you that you call on me in the name of the children. and that you mourn me before I am dead? What makes you howl about a wretched nag? It was not she that owned me, but I that bought her! Tomorrow, if you want them, I will buy ten."

My mother only cried the harder.

"I know, dear Mitar," she said patiently, "but your

enemies will take everything from you. O my beloved, leave those wretched cards alone. Remember that it was by the strength of our backs and the sweat of our blood that we were able to raise this roof above our heads. Is it possible that some miserable money lender will turn me out of my own house?

"But who is turning you out?"

"No one is turning me out, my dear, but I shall be turned out if you go on as you are doing. It is a trade accursed of God."

"Haven't I told you a hundred times not to preach to me, or to whimper without any cause. There is no reason to think that some crow has picked out my brain so that I need my wife for a guardian."

She said no more, that brave soul. Her throat contracted and she shed no more tears. They ran down her breast and fell on her heart. and turned to stone there.

The days followed each other, and he kept on in just the same way. Sometimes he brought home rolls of money, which he lost again as he had won it. He often came back without his rings or watch or gold embroidered belt.

Again he would have two or three watches and several rings. One day it would be a pair of high boots, a cloak, a saddle, or a dozen silver spoons; once it was even a barrel full of liquorice, and all sorts of

other trifles. One evening he brought a black horse, the same one that had belonged to us before.

The next day he bought a new harness; the false martingale hung below the knees of the beast, and the fringes beat against his jaws. My father harnessed him to the carriage, shut the door of the shop with a chair, and drove through the town! The pebbles flew from under the horse's hoofs.

We were prepared for anything. My mother cried. and was anxious. How could she be anything but unhappy? The shop was deserted. He sent away the clerks one after another. Everything went wrong in that unlucky house, and the money ran away like rain.

His companions, heaven help us, began to come to us. They shut themselves up in the big room and lighted several candles; ducats rang and cards slid on the table, pipes smoked, and our servant Stojan never stopped making them coffee (the next morning he showed us some ducats that had been given to him for fees). My mother stayed with us in the other room. Her eyes were red, her face pale, her hands dry, and she repeated over and over again, "O God be with us!"

He became, at last, completely detached from the household life. He never spoke. He never looked my mother in the face. He never caressed us, his children, and while not using really abusive words to us, he was very far from ever saying a kind one. Everybody

kept away from the house. He did give us whatever we needed. If I asked for money to buy a slate pencil, he gave me enough to pay for a whole package. My clothes were the finest in the whole school, and for food he bought the very best to be found in the city. But all the same, something that I did not understand made me suffer whenever I looked at my mother and sister. They had become older, and grown pale and grave and sad. They went nowhere, hardly even to see a few neighbours at the Slava, and very few women came to us. Only the men came, and most of these were dissipated "good for nothings" as my mother called them. There was hardly any work done in the shop. "Do you expect me," said my father, "to amuse myself by selling twenty cents worth of indigo to a boor? That is good enough for the Jews."

My mother was no longer able to protest. She told me that he had said to her one day, "If you will listen, listen, and understand what I am telling you; if ever again you say one word of that kind to me, I will find another house and move into it, and then you can preach here to whoever you choose. Keep that clearly in your mind!"

She was as silent, poor soul, as if she had been ducked. Her heart was rent, she grew whiter day by day, and never stopped imploring God for help. "My God," she prayed, "do not abandon me."

And then . . . you can probably imagine what the end of all this was!

One night they all came. A certain Pero Zelenbach was with them, a pig merchant, who as he expressed it, "worked Pesth." His moustache was waxed and his hair, which was separated by a part in the back, was allowed to fall in curls over his cheeks. He was fat faced and corpulent and wore a curious little hat over one ear. He wore a gold chain on his waistcoat like the one papa had formerly owned, and on his hand was a ring that sparkled, really, my dear fellow, it sparkled so that you couldn't look at it. He waddled in his walk, and spoke in a hoarse bass voice, and you were confused before his little yellow-green eyes, which inspired a sort of dread, such as one feels when looking at an owl.

They arrived, as I said. Stojan was in his place at the stove making their coffee.

Four candles were lighted. The tobacco smoke rose as if from a chimney. They drank coffee in silence like Turks, but the cards fell, and you could hear the ducats ring.

It was a terrible night!

We were shut up in the other room with my mother. She no longer cried. Neither did my sister. With faces set and sunken eyes, they gazed straight in front of them in deadly fear. What happened at my uncle's death was nothing compared to this.

My father came into our room several times. He was covered with sweat. He had unbuttoned his vest and unhooked his shirt, so that one could see the coarse hair on his chest. He was scowling like a Turk.

"Give me more," he said to my mother.

Her heart shrank. Silent, as if made of stone, she opened the chest and gave him handfulls of money which he tied in a handkerchief. He glanced nervously from side to side, and stamped his feet where he stood, as I do when the boys are waiting for me outside and I want my sister to cut me a piece of bread. He took the money, turned away his head, and muttered as he went out, "More than that."

After that you might have said that he ran away from the place.

But still saying, "More than that, more than that," he came, I think, five more times into our room, and this went on until it was almost three o'clock in the morning.

"Give," he said to my mother, and his face was livid.

My mother went to the chest, her legs trembled and she staggered.

Hidden under my coverlid, I could still see how my father's tall figure was shaking and how he supported himself against the stove.

"Be quicker!" he said to my mother, losing all patience and with impatient gestures of his arms.

My mother handed him the money.

"Give me all of it," he said.

"These are the last ten ducats," she answered. It was no longer a voice or a whisper that we heard, but something like a death rattle.

He gathered up the money and rushed out of the room.

My mother sank beside the chest, and fainted. My sister screamed. I sprang out of bed. Djokica did the same. We sat down on the floor around her, and began to kiss her hand, crying, "Mamma, Mamma."

She put her hand on my head and murmured something. Then she rose and lit a small taper and the votive lamp before St. George.

"Come children, pray to God, that he may deliver us from misfortune," she said. Her voice rang like a bell, and her eyes shone like the star of the shepherds, radiant in the sky.

We ran after her to the icon, and all knelt down; while Djokica, kneeling in front of mother, turned his face toward her, crossed himself, and repeated, poor little chap, the half of the pater which he had already learned. Then he crossed himself again, kissed mother's hand, and gave himself up to gazing at her. Two rivers of tears poured from her eyes. Her look was upturned to the saint and to God. There, on high, was something that she could see, her God, whom she adored and who looked down again upon her. At that

moment there came over her face an expression of rapture, a sort of radiance, and it seemed to me that God caressed her with his hand, and that the Saint smiled, and that the dragon died beneath his spear. Then my eyes were dazzled, and I fell forward on the edge of my mother's dress and against her left arm which supported me, and I prayed for the hundredth time, "Oh God, you see my mother! My God, I beseech you for my father!" Then I added, I don't know why, " Oh God, kill that Zelenbach!"

We prayed like this for a long time.

At last my mother rose and climbing on a chair, kissed the image of St. George, my sister did the same, and lifted up Djokica and me so that we could kiss it also. Then my mother took the spray of dried basil which was kept behind the icon and the vial of water that had been blessed at the Epiphany from where it hung below the image. She dipped the basil in the water and murmuring something, she made with the spray a sign of the cross in the room. After that, opening the door very softly, she tiptoed down to the big room, on the door of which she made another cross with her spray of basil.

Ah, how light I felt then, and how happy, as if I had just come from taking a bath. Why is it that I never have that sort of feeling now?

My mother had hardly made her sign of the cross on the door of the big room, when a tumult began in-

side. It was impossible to distinguish anything, except that once we heard Zelenbach shout with all his might.

"Who can force me to go on with the game? Who is the man who will try that?"

Then there was more confused noise and violent disputing. We heard the door open, then a murmur, and steps . . .

But papa did not come back to our room. We waited in vain. The dawn began to break, we fell asleep, Djokica and I, but still he did not come.

When I awoke the sun was already high. I felt horribly tired, but couldn't close my eyes again, so I got up.

Everything seemed in some strange way solemn, but sad. Out of doors, the air was calm, a clear shaft of sunshine fell through the open window, and in front of the icon, a little flame still trembled in the lamp. My mother and sister were as white as linen, their eyes were soft with tears and their faces seemed made of wax. Without letting even their fingers crack, they moved about on tiptoe, and in silence, except for a few whispered words of prayer. They did not give us any breakfast or ask if we were hungry, and my mother did not send me to school.

"What does it mean," I asked myself, "is there a death in the house, or has my uncle come back, and shall we have to bury him over again?"

Then I felt frozen with fear, remembering what had happened during the night, and I murmured mechanically, "Oh God, you know what I prayed to you for papa," and again, "My God kill that Zelenbach."

Without thinking I dressed, went out of my room, and turned naturally toward the big room, but recoiled at once as I felt my mother seize my arm. I turned to her, but she told me nothing, only putting her finger to her lips; and then led me to the house door and left me there. She went back to her room, and I, following her with my eyes, did not know what to think. I slipped back on my toes to the big room, and put my eye to the keyhole.

I noticed carefully what I saw. The table was in the middle of the room, the chairs were scattered about and two or three were overturned. Strewn over the floor were thousands of cards, cigars, some whole and some trodden on, a broken coffee cup, and lying on a card gleamed one gold ducat. The tablecloth was pulled half off. On the table were scattered playing cards, overturned cups full of stubs and cigar ashes and some empty saucers into one of which someone had cleaned out his pipe. Besides this there were four empty candlesticks, in one of which the coarse paper which had been around the candle still burned with a line of black smoke that rose and broke against the ceiling.

On a chair by the table, with his back to the door,

my father was sitting. His elbows were on the table, his head in his hands, he did not move.

I watched a long time but he remained motionless. I was frightened, and imagined some mysterious trouble. It seemed to me, I don't know why, that my father was dead, and I was surprised that a corpse could breathe. Then I thought that his strong arms were made of cardboard, and he could never use them to strike again, and other fancies of the same kind came into my mind.

God knows how long I would have stayed there watching if my mother's hand had not touched me again. She said nothing, but with her eyes she showed me the way to the house door.

And I, I don't know why, took off my hat, kissed her hand, and left the house.

That day was a Saturday.

When I went out into the street, all the world were following their ordinary lives and attending to their business. Sturdy peasants were bringing all sorts of things to the market place, merchants were examining the bags of vegetables and feeling of the lambs. The new Guard shouted, and directed where each man should put his cart. The children stole cherries. Sretan, the towncryer, went through the streets, calling out that it was forbidden to let pigs run free in the streets. Trivko showed quarters of lamb, crying,

"Come and buy roasts," and Josa the drunkard dabbled his feet in a puddle.

"What is the matter, is your shop closed?" Ignace the furrier who was passing at the moment asked me.

"Yes," I said.

"Mitar isn't ill?"

"No," I answered.

"He has gone away somewhere?"

"To the village," I replied, and escaped from the courtyard.

And now there arrived two "witnesses" or "boys of honor" as they were called, that is to say two of my schoolfellows who had been sent by the teacher to see why I had not come to school.

I never remembered until that moment that I should have gone. I caught up my books and a piece of bread, and looked at my mother and the witnesses.

"Say to the master, children, that Misa could not come earlier, that he was detained."

That dear hand! Could I ever kiss it enough,—when she was asleep—when she could not see me.

I do not know what happened at home while I was at school, but I know that when I returned everything was just as I had left it. My mother and sister were sitting with their hands on their knees, the dinner was not cooked, and they tiptoed by the big room and sighed as they had done when my uncle died. Djokica, out in the court, had tied a coffeepot to the cat's tail

and was watching it run. The clerks were sewing on blouses in their room, while Stojan had buried himself in the hay and was snoring as if it was midnight.

My father was sitting in the same place. He had not stirred. His furlined coat, fastened around his broad shoulders, gaped open at the waist from his heavy breathing.

Vespers had rung long ago.

The day was sinking to its close, and in our hearts reigned the same despair, to which no one could see any end, but only clouds that gathered thicker and thicker. Everything grew more intolerable, more terrible and more desperate.

"Return again, O my God, and have mercy."

I sat on the doorstep, in front of the house. I held some schoolbook in my hand, but I did not read it. I saw in the window my mother's white face, resting on her little feverish hand. My ears rang, and I could not think at all.

Suddenly a key grated in the lock. My mother disappeared from the window. I simply could not think.

The door of the big room was open. He stood on the threshold—he—my father!

His fez, pushed back a little, showed the hair which fell over his wide brow. His moustache drooped, and his face had grown sombre and much older. But his eyes, those eyes! They had not the least resemblance to what his eyes had been. They had simply vanished,

sunk into his head; half covered by the lids, they moved slowly and looked out with no interest or expression. They looked for nothing and they noticed nothing. There was about them a sort of emptiness, like spectacles with the glass broken out. On his lips was a sad gentle smile, such as had never been seen there before. It was the same expression that my uncle had had, when, just before his death, he asked for the sacrament.

He went slowly down the hall, opened the door of our room, looked in, and then passed through without a word. Having closed the door behind him, he went out into the street, and walked slowly toward the house of his partner Ilija.

Thomas, the latter's son, told me later that his father and mine were shut up together in a room, that they talked a long time about something in a low voice, that they had had paper brought, and ink, and that they had written something and put seals on it. What this was he did not know, and no one ever found out.

At about half past nine, we were all in bed except my mother who sat with folded hands, gazing at the candle. At that moment the gate of the courtyard creaked. My mother blew out the candle and slipped into bed.

My heart beat under my blanket as if someone was hitting my chest with a hammer.

The door opened and my father came in. He moved once or twice across the room, and undressed without lighting the candle and went to bed. For a long time I heard him turning in his bed, and then I fell asleep.

I don't know how long I had slept, when I felt something damp on my forehead. I opened my eyes and watched. The full moon looked directly into our room and its rays fell on my mother's face, like spider-webs.

Her eyes were closed, she had the look of a person who is very ill, and her breath came quick and short.

Above her stood my father, motionless, with his eyes riveted on her face.

After a little while he came to our bed, but merely looked at us and at my sister. Then he placed himself once more in the middle of the room, encircled it again with his eyes and muttered, "They are asleep."

But he shuddered at the sound of his own voice, and seemed to turn to stone. There, in the centre of the room, he stood a long time without any change except that I saw his eyes soften from time to time as he looked, first at us and then at my mother.

We never made a sign!

Then, moving quietly and without ever taking his eyes off us he carefully unhooked his silver pistol from the cloakstand where it hung, thrust it into his coat, pulled his fez over his eyes, and walking with quick long strides, went out of the house.

The door had hardly closed after him when my mother rose up in her bed. My sister did the same. You might have thought them spirits!

My mother got up quickly, but with caution, and went to the door. My sister followed her.

"Stay with the children," whispered my mother, and went out.

I sprang up and started for the door. My sister caught me by the arm, but I slipped out of her grasp, and said:

"Stay with the children."

As soon as I was out of the house I ran to the hedge-row and slipping along it, hiding under the cherry trees, I got to the well, behind which I hid myself.

The night was divinely beautiful. The sky was clear, the moon brilliant, the air full of freshness, and nothing was moving anywhere. I saw my father look into the window of the clerk's room, and then go on. At last he stopped under the shed roof, and drew out his pistol. But, just at this moment, my mother, coming from I don't know where, appeared beside him.

The poor man was frozen with terror. He gazed at her with open mouth.

"Mitar, my dear, my Lord and Master, what do you mean to do?"

My father trembled. Stuck there like a candle, he

looked at my mother with empty eyes, and said in a voice like a cracked bell:

"Go away, Marica, leave me, I am lost."

"What! Lost, my lord? May God help you, why do you say that?"

"I have thrown away everything!"

"But, my dear, it was you who first earned it!"

My father started back, and stood abashed before my mother.

"Yes, but all," he said, "all, all."

"And even if that is so?" said my mother.

"The horse too," he replied.

"An old nag," she answered.

"And the field!"

"Just dirt."

He came close to my mother, and looked into the white of her eyes, as if he would scorch her, but she stood like a saint of the good God.

"The house too," he said, opening his eyes very wide.

"And what of that," said my mother, "so long as you, yourself, are here strong and well?"

"Marica!"

"Mitar!"

"What do you mean, Marica?"

"I mean that God has let you have life, as he has our children. It is not the house nor the field that

takes care of us, but you, our provider. We will never suffer from hunger while you are with us."

My father seemed moved. Putting his hand on my mother's shoulder, he began—

"Marica! Do you . . ." His voice choked. He covered his eyes with his sleeve and was silent.

My mother took his hand.

"When we were married," she said, "we had nothing but one blanket, just one, and only two or three tubs and barrels. While now, thank God, the house is full."

I saw a drop fall, which shone in the moonlight, as it traced its path down my father's sleeve.

"And have you forgotten that the garret is full of gall nuts?"

"Yes, it is full of them," said my father, in a voice as soft as silk. He took his sleeve away from his eyes, and let his arms fall.

"What is that wretched ducat doing there? What is that money lying on the ground?"

"Take it for your business!"

"We will put it into wheat!"

"Are we too old to begin again? By the grace of God we are well and our children have good health. Let us pray to the good God and go to work."

"Like the honest people we are!"

"You are not stupid like some men. I would not

give your arms for all the money of Panaros and others like him."

"And then we will buy another house."

"We will bring up our children in the right path," said my mother.

"So that they may not curse me when I am dead. How long it is since I have seen them!"

"Come and see them," said my mother, and she led him like a child, by the hand.

In three bounds I was back in my room. I whispered to my sister, "get into bed," and then pulled the blanket over my own head.

Those two crossed the threshold, just as the church bells rang for the early mass. They reverberate through the night and the christian soul trembles. Like a bed of dry branches, their sound softens grief and pain, and breaks the chains of vanity, so that the contrite soul can speak with heaven.

"Rise my son, and let us go to church!"

When I was in Belgrade, last year, buying some merchandise I saw Pero Zelenbach, at Torpieder, in the dress of a convict. He was breaking stones.

KANJOSH MACEDONOVICH.

A Tale of the Pashtrovichi, taken from the Fifteenth Century.

By Stjepan Mitrov Ljubisa (1824-1878)

Stjepan Mitrov Ljubisa was born in Budva (Pastrovich) Bocce di Cattaro, Dalmatia, in 1824. He had little education having only attended school during the first four elementary years' course. For a while he was clerk in the Mayor's office in his native village and then in 1861 he was elected deputy to the Diet of Lara (Dalmatia). Later on he was chosen deputy to the Parliament at Vienna, as Dalmatia was at that time a part of Austria-Hungary though at present it is, except for a few places still under discussion, part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. He was a politician of high character and merit and defended well the rights of the Serbs in Dalmatia. A writer of great talent, he published two volumes of stories which are all based on the popular legends of his native country. He died in 1878.

KANJOSH MACEDONOVICH

By Stjepan Mitrov Ljubisa

In the middle of the coast of the territory of the Pashtrovichi is a small inlet—a bare coast which the people even to-day call "The Fine Sand." This, a long time ago, was the place where the people met for their assembly and made decisions when the community was free and governed itself independently.

Four judges and twelve nobles from every tribe, a man for each, chosen freely and in turn would sit on a boundary above the sand and the other householders one after the other on "The Sand." There they would make decrees and judge the most important matters. A skilled clerk would on each occasion enter in a great book what the assembly had decided, or what judgments the judges had pronounced.

Every year on Bidov's day in the height of the summer the assembly chose freely the judges and nobles for the year. They handed them the code of law, the ancient books, the charter and the silver seal; and the newly-elected swore to the assembly that they would impartially administer justice and carry out the laws and decisions of the assembly.

In the famine-stricken year 1423, at the beginning of April, Gembo the voivoda of the coast enticed and cheated them into putting themselves of their own

free will under the protection of the winged lion of St. Mark, pretending that it was in order that the Turks might not scorch them up. It was agreed in writing on "The Sand" that their constitution should be left to them in its entirety and that no kind of toll should be taken from them, neither a monetary tax nor a tax of persons. Do not ask me how Venice kept her word, and how little by little she mutilated and shaved away the concessions that had been agreed upon. You know it yourself or you can easily find out. It was just as when a young man, swift and cunning, continually implores and beseeches a young and ignorant girl, and she, poor thing, gives way a little to-day, a little to-morrow until she becomes his slave, and at last can refuse him nothing.

One spring day at the chief assembly which the judges and nobles had summoned at the usual place of justice to divide the dried-up reed-beds, there came late to the assembly Kanjosh Macedonovich, a man of low stature but as alive and alert as though he could balance on the point of a needle. A sword at his belt and a helmet on his head he cried:—

"God help you, brothers!"

He had just come from a visit to Venice and so they all embraced and kissed him.

When he sat down the judges began questioning him about Venice and the tidings he had collected there and brought with him.

"I have plenty to tell you if you will not be tired of listening," said Kanjosh. "As you have heard I took some merchandise to Venice this winter and filled a ship to the brim with olive oil, wine, pitch, and skins. When I came there, spies pressed upon me, to extort and fleece me:

" 'Of each hundred peppercorns give thirty to St. Mark,' said the head of the spies; and one who spoke our language brokenly added:—

" 'And enough drink for us!'

" 'Thirty per cent! That is half, if you are to reckon my trouble, waste of time and the hire of the boat. Saint Mark, Thanks and Glory to him! neither eats nor drinks, and I have agreed with the Doge that I should give him nothing, but that I should kiss his hand, and that he should defend me from the Turk.'

" 'Cheap indeed!' said the spy, 'if you are to do nothing but kiss his hand.' And he began to smile and to laugh. And so, I swear by Sunday, the devil drank up my mind, and if he had not gone into the castle I should have cut him in two with my sword. Then my trouble with the Doge would have been for nothing.

"And I having made an end in that way, knocked about and tore through the town until good fortune brought me to a good-hearted man. He took me along with him that I might have my complaints written down in the house of a bald man who took a ducat

from me for writing down my wrongs on a span of paper.

"'Wait,' I said. 'Do not be in a hurry, let me tell you different things—' but he said witheringly to me:—

"'I know better when I am asleep than you when you are fully awake.'

"Then he would no longer listen to me but instantly shut the door.

"So I took that evil letter and they led me with it to a fine house and said that I should wait.

"I waited and waited three good hours, until my sorrow enveloped me. Then at last the door opened and out stumbled a lame man in green clothing like a lizard. He took my paper from my hand, fixed his spectacles on his nose, then, scarcely having read it through he said:—

"'These are not our affairs, but hasten where you came from.'

"I cried out:—'But whose affairs are they, for the wounds of God? Why do you torture me?'

"He did not turn round, but limping in the direction of the doors he mumbled:—

"'The forty.'

"I thought:—What devil will collect them at once? But my guide told me that they were always assembled.

"'But,' he said, 'hasten before they disperse.'

"When I came there the guard cried:—

"'They are not judging to-day, but another day. Come earlier to-morrow.'

"It was getting dark, and I had eaten nothing, but was filled with sorrow from my throat to my breath, and I went straight to bed without food.

"A devilish dream I had the whole night; but I turned about and threw myself over until dawn. At daybreak I rose and went round Venice from end to end. The sun was already three lances risen, but the town was deserted and without people; for there everyone sleeps until midday. When it is dusk they feast; but before dawn they lie down. By God's help I found a guide and I went with him to the Forty.

"We went into the palace and waited in the first vestibule two whole hours, until a man in black clothing and cap came out. I should say he was the priest.

"I advanced and gave him the letter and he said to me:—

"'To-day we have a great rush of business, but come the day after to-morrow and bring your letter.'

"And I the next day but one waited again three hours before the doors, and I wearied God praying him not to turn from me until at least a servant had been touched. They went into a room and brought out a young man, dried up and tall as though they had drawn him from a grave. He solemnly brought that ill-omened complaint and wrote under it five or six words, then he directed me to a second, and the

second to a third, until the soul of the third was touched.

"'And why did you not come to me before,' he said, 'instead of making a web round the town like a butterfly round a candle.'

"Then he also admonished me with the following words:—

"'Come to-morrow,' he said, 'in order that I may give you information on the smallest detail, for you are too late for that work to-day.'

"And I went the next day but there was no trace of him and the wretched doors were closed. I knocked and beat my breast but there was no answer from the chicken-hearted soul.

"I waited there until dark night, until my brain began to turn to water. Then, sad and sorrowful, I thought over my situation and went to an inn, pretending to pull myself together with wine. I was just about to eat some meat when there resounded and shrilled through the inn:—

"'What is the news, man?'

"'Evil,' said a man from Grach. 'It could not be worse.'

"' Tell us, man, that I may know about it, too.'

"The man of Grach began to tell how a certain great man from Fur withdrew his fealty from the Doge and burst into rebellion against him.

"'He put up a tent,' said the man of Grach, 'on

a certain little island in the middle of the city. The water all round protected him, and he called the Doge to a combat, or if he did not either come out himself in combat or send a combatant in his place, he (the Doge) was to hand over to him the keys of the treasure of Saint Mark and his only daughter for a wife. Venice remained under this impost,' said the man of Grach laughing. 'There was not a champion, and the Doge lost courage with his age in his heart. He was ready to give the man of Fur his daughter and to give up the sovereignty to him.'

"'And was it not possible,' said I, 'in such a great city to find a champion?'

"'No, God be with me, not a single one,' answered the man of Grach. 'Everyone feels comfortable for himself.'

"'Just see how small I am, and yet how willingly I would try my hand with him!'

"Those men began to laugh among themselves at seeing me such a handful of misery, and one who had looked me all over, said:—

"'Men are not measured by a handrule; but by their boldness and sense.'—and this man accompanied me right up to the sleeping room, and the whole way he questioned me and asked me who I was and where I came from.

"In the morning I had hardly on my shoes when there was a man beside me.

"'Quick!' he called, 'the court is waiting for you.'

"I thought:—The one who deceived me yesterday is summoning me; but when I came to the judgment it was another and more spacious house—steps of marble, and pillars as high as a white poplar.

"I went into a court where sat three old men under a black curtain. If a candle had not been burning I should have seen nothing—and in front of them was a golden cross. They asked me whence I came, and why I was knocking about Venice. I told them all in order, as I am now telling you, until one broke in:—

"'I am not asking you about trifles (mark that! 'trifles') but what were you drivelling about last night in the inn?'

"I told him all truly and shortly:— 'I was not drivelling, nor was I drunk, but I was talking well—better than you are now.'

"One of them smiled:—'But are there really among you true servants who would die for the Doge?'

"'Yes, a hundred,' said I.

"They added something in a whisper, until the same one spoke again:—

"'Here is a letter for you, granting that you may sell merchandise freely without customs duty.'

"At that one of the men with him laughed:—'Someone has been playing a joke on you, but we will tell him how he must treat the Pastrovichi when they bring merchandise—and here are ten ducats for you

for your waste of time. Come here early to-morrow and we will talk over something—not three hundred in the evening and nothing in the morning.'

"I said to them:—

"'I will not take a single piece of money from you, my lords, if you have given judgment that the spy was joking, and that he shall pay for his joke. I am going about my work now, and you shall behold me to-morrow when it is finished.'

"I sold my merchandise for ready money and settled my affairs, and when I went to the court next morning, there those three were waiting for me since dawn.

"They gave me a little table to sit at and brought me about half a pint of coffee.

"I thought that I would return it as a bribe; but that seemed shameful to me and I drained it to the bottom.

"One judge began:—'Would you oblige me by taking to your brothers the Doge's greeting and affection, and ask them to send the Doge a champion to fight a boaster with whom it is not worthy for the Doge to soil his hands?'

"I answered that I would be willing to take the affection and greeting of the honored Doge to my brothers if I were to hear those words from his own lips.

"'As regards your asking for a champion for the Doge, to destroy his rebel—I consider that if it is not a glory for the Doge to fight him himself, neither would it be worthy for him to send anyone in his place, for that would mean two shameful deeds.'

"The judge saw that he did not prevail and he said to me:—'You have not understood it rightly; but come to-morrow at midday to the Doge's palace that we may bring you before the Doge and that you may make your homage and receive your instructions.'

"The next day I dressed myself in a green velvet dolman that I had had made the year before in Ragusa, and a tunic and leggings of pure spangles that I had got in Skador in the summer. On my girdle was a superfine sword in a silver sheath that my grandfather had bought for me in Spain, and on my head a Constantinople helmet—on the top of which there stood a swan's feather almost as high as myself.

"When I came to the Doge's entry there were nobles like chaff, all dressed in silk embroidered with gold. Servants came up and accompanied me to their lord. All collected around me like birds round a white owl, to look at me and to touch my clothes. What a pity that I was not taller!

"At that moment a great door opened and there came forth an old man white as a sheep.

"'Here is the Doge!' they cried—and behind him out stumbled the Doge.

"The moment I saw him I said to myself:—'That man could not even pull a tail, much less fight!'

"He went straight to me, struck me on the shoulder and took my right hand as though we had seen each other a hundred times, and had eaten together. He turned to one of those nobles who had been most polite and began to talk to him in a half-voice, so that I could neither hear nor understand anything, until the noble began our language, and I should say it was like the Kotorski dialect.

" 'The mighty Doge of most illustrious power,' he said, 'confers upon me the honorable task of interpreting his words to you. You are fortunate if you accept them. He, and all the nobles with him, esteem highly your brotherhood which has lately sought refuge under the shadow of the winged lion to escape from the Turkish yoke—one of the truest people who have had the good fortune to live under this rich and just empire which is the seat of God. Now the suitable moment has come for you to establish firmly this opinion of the Doge. There is need for a champion for the Doge, who shall go out to battle against a mad and worthless rascal who hates to live and is trying to immortalize himself by a disgusting deed. The Doge might pick anyone for his champion—not one, but three hundred—and champions of a kind to make the world tremble, but the Doge has driven away all pretenders to his daughter's hand because he wishes

to open the path of glory, honor and immortality to your brothers who have lately become his sons. Go home, then, as quickly as possible, take your brothers the greeting and affection of the Doge and let them send him—the quicker the better—a champion for him suitable in form and in heroism, and this champion will, if God grant it, establish their renown and fortune.'

"I bent myself to the black ground and said to myself:— 'How nicely these lords know how to butter and paint!' and to the Doge I said that I did not doubt in the very least that my brothers would willingly and with pleasure accept such a noble honor, and that they would send the Doge a hero worthy of him.

"They would have liked to give me travelling expenses of I do not know how many ducats, but I refused it and turned from Venice on the Monday in Holy Week. Now decide wisely whether you will send anyone and what God and fortune will give him."

One of the nobles who had not moved an eyelid the whole time Kanjosh was speaking began first:—

"At the time I fought the capitulation and put obstacles in the way of it to the very muscles of my heel, urging that we should leave such Latin rascals alone, for I knew even then that an agreement with them would not help you. If it had not been for that Furlan who has put the Venetians 'into a goat's

horn,' Kanjosh would have paid thirty per cent and the drink and he would have knocked about Venice in vain until Easter from one evil to another and have become the laughing stock of that scoundrel the spy. At the time of the capitulation you answered:— 'The Turks will consume us.' Now in which of your ills will the Venetians on their dry land help you, when the Turks have attacked across Albania? Would it not have been better for us to hold by the same thread as the other Serbs and to defend our independence at the point of the sword? Do you see the people of Ragusa, how wisely they have behaved, and this though they are not fighters. Now to kill this Furlan is to wash an ass's tail instead of holding the reins. Every year again you will give your seamen and a tax and they will receive your complaints as they received that of Kanjosh. Do you not agree with this? They will destroy those few houses by the sea and send the Turks to crush you. Our charter was recognized by nine Roman and Byzantine emperors from Diocletian to Constantine. The Pope of Rome confirmed it and so did that Lujo from Hungary who cut off fourteen hundred heads beyond the Bare Height. The Serbian emperors from the Nemanjas to the Brankovich also confirmed it. If you had paid attention to me, the Venetians also would have confirmed it without a surrender. The idea of their opening the path of glory and honor to us! As much of it, perhaps, as

God has given them at home! But now at least hear me. An opportunity has come to correct our faults and to save ourselves from such Latin rascals. Let us send the Doge a champion, but first let him nullify our treaty and surrender, let him promise that we will always and in every war be neighbours against the non-Christian; but that we will not have the Venetians as our lords as long as one of us endure. They themselves broke the contract when they inflicted such sufferings upon Kanjosh—'Come to-day, come to-morrow to pay us the tax.' If we kill this Furlan it is well—but if not? Let us think out another way for us to cut ourselves free at one stroke, so that we may be masters of our own house. They thought as I do now—those men who remained on the land, on the moor, on the top of the Bare Height. There are to-day a thousand men who would die to preserve our future freedom and independence. Let the man whose life is dearest to him go to take prisoner this Furlan. An honorable destruction is better than a shameful return."

Imagine whether they were excited at these words, until one of the judges began to speak softly:—

"It may be that we shall not send a champion, and that we may be grateful for these honors, if you think that this Furlan is better for us than the Doge. It may be that we shall break our contract and go to war with the Venetians; but look all around the question

first. I have a reason for this—not one, but many. Suppose that we do not pay the tax, we have nowhere to send merchandise save Venice. Is it not so? Now as soon as we cease to be one of the Venetian peoples we shall pay the import tax, and as companions in war we shall give seamen forever. If they are torturing us now when we are theirs, what should we do if we had estranged them? Pull yourselves together and find a better train of reasoning, for this is a very poor one. When you mention emperors and princes, we have always had a master who has held us by the hair even though we governed ourselves independently, and therefore it cannot be so strange to us to-day. As to your saying that it would be better for us to resist with the other Serbs—I ask 'Where are they?' Serbia has fallen, Bosnia has fallen and now it is Albania's hour. The Serbian rulers have fled into the Hungarian lands, and the poor people remain under the yoke. The banship of Zeta has fallen and the people have fled into the mountains there. Who then will help us when the Turkish fleets sweep over the sea? The Serbs cannot know either of our life or of our death for a year, and how can they help? As to your accusation against the Venetians—that they have levied the tax in spite of agreement—tell me of one man who has paid it—make me believe that Kanjosh would have given it if it had not been for the Furlan. Sailors only go on a voyage

because it is pleasanter for them to idle on ships than to till the earth at home, and you say that the Venetians take them by force! These are reproaches; but let heroism and evil fortune go, and keep what you have got. Mighty empires have fallen and fearful armies have gone down before the might of Asia. The West trembles and the East blows—its last candle is put out. And we—a handful of men on a spot which is plundered from sea and from land—how are we to fight, unless it is with fists, for our own heads? Say, if you will, that I am prejudiced; I see clearly. Without the help of Venice, we shall remain slaves eternally."

One of the people began to speak:—

"And I, I agree with him that your contract be firm with the stronger power, even so far as to think that it is better to make it firm with a striking deed. To put the Venetians in our debt is to open the path of honor for ourselves. Let Kanjosh go as champion to the Doge, and if God grant that he kill that Italian dragon, let him seek to have the solemn contract honored, so that the spies of the Doge should not drag us away against our will in the streets of Venice. If he perish, then we will send a second and a third champion. Perhaps this Furlan will not kill us all."

All agreed to this; but Kanjosh sprang to his feet and cried:—

"I dare not go, for I am small, and the Doge is looking for a group of men to go against this Furlan!" The majority cried out:

"If he kills you, we will send some one larger. You are versed in the ways of Venice, but another man would not even know how to get to the Doge's palace for a month. If you die, we will mourn for you divinely and every one of us when he goes to Venice will make a pilgrimage to your grave. You might carry out that business there yourself in order not to confuse the assembly with such idle matters."

Kanjosh said:—

"You are joking; but I tell you seriously that I accept the honor of going in combat against this Furlan; and let it be in the hands of God. But draw up a proper commission so that the Doge may know that I come from the head of the whole people."

The clerk wrote down a letter as the judges dictated it, then he read it aloud to the people, word for word:—

"From our judges, leaders, nobles and the whole people—in the name of the people of the faithful community of the Pashtrovichi. To the illustrious Doge greeting—and to his Venetian nobility honor and homage. Our noble brother Kanjosh Macedonovich brought us loving greetings from you and a request that we should send a brother who would go forth to a contest of heroes in place of the Doge. We are al-

ways ready and worthy. To please the illustrious power of Venice, we send you here that same Kanjosh, and we say:—

"'Where he is, there are we all also.'

"Grateful for the honor that you have done us, we trust first in God and then in our old-time fortune that we shall win against this as against all other enemies of the Doge.

"Decided in the customary place of justice on the Feast of the Martyrs in the spring, and sealed with a hanging seal."

Kanjosh came to Venice on Palm Sunday at the most beautiful time of the year. He did not know where to go, or where not to go; but he went to the house of those three where he had drunk the coffee. At first the guard would not let him enter but called to him:—

"You cannot go there, but if you wish to be judged get along to the Forty."

Kanjosh saw that they were beginning again to send him from pillar to post and he answered the guard sharply:—

"That is not their work. Why should I go to the Forty and not to the Three? If you want to know who I am, I am the Doge's champion."

Kanjosh had hardly uttered this good news when the guard raised his cap from his head and led Kanjosh from chamber to chamber until they came be-

fore the Three. When the Three saw Kanjosh they frowned, because they thought the Pashtrovichi were not going to send a champion for the Doge. Kanjosh bowed to them and handed them the letter. All three pressed forward to look at what was written, and one of them said, after they had talked among themselves:—

"We hoped that a better and a taller hero than you would have come."

Kanjosh was angry enough to burst:—

"Better and taller men go forth to better and taller men; but you just fall to my share. I have come first to you because I do not wish to go before the Doge except in triumph—and it were well that you receive me!"

"Very well," said all three, "if you do not wish to go before the Doge but to hasten to your destruction to-morrow. Is your sword sharp?"

"For those heroes of yours," answered Kanjosh, "It will not be necessary to sharpen it, it would only wear away the steel. Tell me where the battle is and the champion, and then we shall see what who is going to give to whom."

They gave him a companion and told him to go with Kanjosh to lead him to the Furlan, and they told him where to bury him.

The sun had passed half across the sky when they came to the shore:—

"There you are," said the guide, "On that island is the champion and here is a little boat for you, and you go alone."

Kanjosh said to him:—

"Come with me, stupid one. Turn the boat and carry me over. I will give you pay, and you may be my second."

"I have not gone mad, nor do I hate life, nor is it my lot before God, to lose my life for glory!" and he fled leaving no trace.

Kanjosh remained alone.

"Now what shall I do? I might have been sitting at home like a gentleman! Some of my sins have brought me to this, that I should die vainly here—and that it should be for a man, not to right any wrong, but for a cowardly puffed-up nobody. I will go now for the night, then to-morrow I will go again before the judges so that they may give me a companion who will be my second, so that if I die at least my grave may be known. As things are now I may perish foolishly before the duel."

At this moment a little boat set off from the island and reached the shore. Was it really the Furlan with a broad sword at his belt and dressed in a wolf-skin? He cried aloud to Kanjosh:—

"What is there—evil fortune to you! Who are you?"

"I," said Kanjosh, "am the Doge's champion—but come to the place where we are to fight."

"Do not jest, but tell me who you are!" cried the Furlan.

"You will soon know who I am," answered Kanjosh. "But let us begin fighting quickly, I have no time to waste!" And he seized his sword and gnashed his teeth.

Each embarked in his own boat and went over, turning the boat by the rudder. When they reached the island both jumped simultaneously onto the shore, and Kanjosh pushed his boat off from the shore.

"What are you doing," called the Furlan, "casting off your boat? Are you in your right mind?"

"We do not need two," answered Kanjosh, "I shall return in yours, and you will need neither a boat nor a horse, for you have drunk your glass to the dregs."

The Furlan was terrified, and began to tell of how many heroes he had fought and killed.

Kanjosh called to him:— "Be quiet, you coward! You have not even seen a hero, much less killed one. Throw me your broad sword that I may bind your hands and lead you to the Doge so that he may pity you and pardon you when he sees you in such a position."

"Let disaster and battle go," said the Furlan, "and come to my tent. Let us dine—and believe me, unknown hero, that Doge for whose sake you are going

to die, is an enemy to you just as much as he is to me, and I pity you because the Devil has brought you here in order that I may drain that innocent blood of yours."

"Do not pity me," cried Kanjosh, and he drew his sword from the scabbard and rushed upon the Furlan. The Furlan, however, beat off the sword with his broad sword and on the blunt edge of it there was a dent big enough for a thumb to go into. Kanjosh returned to the attack a second and a third time; but the Furlan, in a skilful way, beat him off until Kanjosh by springing round, turned him in such a way that the sun was in his eyes. The Furlan struck once and so accurately that if Kanjosh had not sharply let his body go, the Furlan would have cut him asunder. When the Furlan smote a second time, Kanjosh sprang round him and cut him with his sword from the left breast up to the right shoulder blade. The Furlan fell, and there flowed from his wound unclean blood as though an ox had been slaughtered.

Kanjosh came up to him, drew the ring from his finger and unbelted his sword. Then he left him to breathe his last.

He embarked in the little boat and reached the shore. There on the shore was collected every woman in Venice. It was a matter of nine anxieties to

make his way with those women accompanying him with song and rejoicing.

"Those women were harder for me," said Kanjosh later, "than the Furlan and his broad sword."

The news flew through the town like lightning that the Furlan had fallen. One man said that he had seen his head, another his heart, another described the battle as though he had seen the whole thing with his own eyes and a hundred collected round him to listen. The bells in all the churches rang, the shops shut before dark, flutes and big drums played, the town was illuminated so that one could see as though it were midday, and the people flocked together from every quarter to the high ground to their church, to thank God and to make offerings because the city had been saved from so imminent a danger.

In the first dusk about three hundred men dressed in uniform dress, and behind them the world in general in masses, with torches and great wax candles, came to the house of Kanjosh and carried him in a golden litter to the Doge's palace. There laudations of Kanjosh and rejoicings lasted the whole night through. The Doge and his nobles questioned him about the duel and about the Furlan. They looked at him and tried his sword, while he gave the ring and the broad sword of the Furlan to the Doge as a gift.

"Here are the tokens for you, my liege Doge, that I took from my dead opponent. May all your en-

emies both on sea and on dry land perish as this Furlan has to-day!"

Thus Kanjosh spoke, and the Doge took him by both hands and kissed him in the middle of his forehead.

The following day at midday the Doge with all the nobility came to Saint Mark's for a thanksgiving, and behind them an immense multitude that stretched further than the eye could see. The church was decorated just as it is on the highest saints' days. They allotted a place for Kanjosh shut off and high up, beside the Doge, and the church was filled to overflowing with nobles pressed one upon another so that they could not move.

After the religious service, the Doge with Kanjosh on his right hand, and the nobles and his suite, set forth to the great chamber where the Doges were given their crowns and the emperors were received. Its vaulting was all adorned with gold, its marble columns were twisted round with golden thread. The chairs were of velvet with pearl ornamentation, and the Doge's throne was of elephant hide adorned with lion skin.

The Doge sat down and from his throne began to speak Italian. When he had finished, one of the nobles present translated the Doge's words to Kanjosh into his own language—full of honey and gratitude they were to him and to the community that had sent him.

"Now," said the interpreter, "see here we have opened the treasure of Saint Mark, come up and take as much as you wish and what you yourself ask for."

Kanjosh drew close to a bronze coffer of three locks—a coffer full to suffocation of golden ducats.

Kanjosh looked at the treasure, smiled, drew out a ducat from his purse, and threw it into the coffer.

"What are you doing?" cried the astounded interpreter, and Kanjosh replied:—

"If you were to take things out of that coffer instead of putting them in, the treasure would quickly be finished, you would see the bottom of it very quickly."

Shortly after this the same noble said to Kanjosh that the Doge would be exceedingly pleased if Kanjosh would remain among them, and that he would gladly give him his only daughter for a wife.

"I thank you," said Kanjosh "for such a noble offer. In our community it is an unbroken custom that each one should marry within his own brotherhood and so we preserve the honor of our sisters."

"But you must take some kind of present," said the Doge.

"I ask," said Kanjosh, "that you should not levy a tax upon us, nor take our sailors—that you adhere honorably to the agreement that we ratified before the surrender, and for a better guarantee, that the

piece of shore in Venice beside the sea where our merchandise is unloaded be called by the name of our people. Other gifts or tokens I neither seek nor would accept."

The senate ordered that that place always be called the Slavonic Market "La Riva degli slavoni" and decreed that slavonic merchandise brought there should be unloaded and shipped without tax or custom. These orders and decrees, however, lasted as long as a cat's husband. The Venetians turned the name of the place to a low and base use "Riva dei schiavoni" (The seaboard of the slaves) and little by little they introduced the tax and began to take an impost—paying no regard either to the agreement or to the word that had been given to Kanjosh. For this reason there grew up a proverb among the people that is remembered even to-day:—

"As they did, so they prospered."

VIDOSAVA BRANKOVICH

By Zmaj-Jovan Jovanovich

Zmaj-Jovan Jovanovich was born in 1833 at Novi Sad, (Bachka) which was formerly in Austria-Hungary and is now a part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. He completed his course first of all at the Law School and then at the Medical School at Vienna and was a practicing physician during his whole life, first in his native town and then at Belgrade and other places in Serbia. He was editor of many satirical and political journals of a very liberal character and he founded a magazine for young people and became a very popular poet among children. He was a member of the Serbian Royal Academy. He died in 1904.

Jovanovich was one of the best lyric poets of Serbia and wrote many volumes of satirical, political and love poems. He translated the works of some of the Russian poets (Lermontoff), and of the Germans (Goethe and Heine) and also of the Americans (Longfellow), etc.

VIDOSAVA BRANKOVICH [1]

By Zmaj-Jovan Jovanovich

I

It happened a long time ago, what I am going to tell you, more than a hundred years ago.

Those who could testify to it are all dead, but a murmur of it still lives feebly in the neighborhood of P——— and in order that it too may not be lost with some old woman—as might very likely soon happen—I am writing it down here as I remember once having heard it somewhere.

He who comes for the first time to our beautiful, cultivated Srem, to the beautiful Frushka Gora must not expect to find there the Serbian Alps, neither must he expect the savage beauty of rocky heights such as the eye cannot reach, nor fearsome precipices where the ray of the sun cannot penetrate, nor must he expect there a Serbian Ætna or Vesuvius belching forth fire, lava, and stones. He will find all that—even to excess—in Montenegro.

Here the beauty is of another kind.

God created Frushka while he was taking rest.

Frushka seems to me like a modest woman, a good

[1] The story turns upon the curse which rests upon the Brankovich family. By national tradition it was Vuk Brankovich who betrayed the Serbian army to the Turks at Kossovo (1389) and who was therefore the cause of the fall of the Serbian Empire.

mother. Cultivated, undulating, fertile, vine-covered hills are as it were her breasts for her beloved children the Serbs, and the children are grateful, for they have adorned their mother with precious stones—for are there not fourteen monasteries, fourteen precious stones?

In this cultivated Srem, in this beautiful Frushka Gora beside the Danube lies the village of P———. There we will stay for a short time.

Let him who will come with me into the chamber, but lightly, on tiptoe. More softly, more softly, the invalid is asleep—has just closed his eyes! An ancient, feeble, blind old man is praying tremblingly to God over his sick daughter. More softly! Let us not disturb his prayer. A fine young man with crossed hands is standing beside the bed, looking at the sick girl as though he were looking at his Saviour.

The blind feeble old man is Urosh Brankovich, priest of the village of P———, and how the whole neighbourhood, for the last fifty years, has honoured and loved him! There are few people in the village whom he has not christened, few couples whom he has not married, and all who have gone to God in the true faith during that time, father Urosh has absolved and buried.

A year ago he was far more fortunate and satisfied—a year ago he looked out over the fair earth with clear

eyes and saw, and he had something worth seeing. Five beloved sons, like five falcons, loved and served him, and a beloved daughter Vidosava unfolded amongst them like a flower such as there is not on the earth.

He looked at his good fortune; but he did not dare to believe in it, for his thoughts often led him to a bloody field, to an enormous grave into which thousands of Serbian heroes, and their empire with them, had fallen. He often remembered his ancestry, he remembered the ill-omened Vuk, and then he would always heave a sigh and think:—

"Can I really be fortunate, can a blessing fall upon me? It is all a deceitful dream and hard will it be for me when I wake!"

He thought this, but he told no one of it.

Time and again, when he was celebrating the holy service, he trembled before the altar, and his throat would contract as though he were not worthy to pray to God. Time and again he would glance at the holy elements and, as though he were the greatest sinner, would hardly dare to receive them. And why? Truly not even he himself knew.

There is no blacker nor more fearful sin than to betray one's people.

Fearful is that sin, and it falls upon the innocent also!

In the course of one year, five deep wounds and five black illnesses are much; and to whom does evil fortune give strength enough to lose five fair sons in a year, and to return home alive from five graves?

Urosh Brankovich lost all his five falcons, all his five sons. He wept bitterly for the fourth, but his tears wiped the fair earth from his eyes. His four black graves drew four black veils over his eyes—over the four dark graves. He could not see the fifth —for the fifth son the fond father could not even weep. Where could he have found tears? Their source had dried up, and what else could the eyes have done after weeping for four sons?

Ill fortune, when she runs, does not know what is enough.

When they had buried the fifth son of Brankovich and were returning home, Vidosava led her father by the hand. The rain was pouring out of the sky, out of the earth. Their way led them across a stream which was so rapid after the great rain that it bore rocks and blocks of wood along with it. Now it had become a regular torrent. The water had already begun slowly to lift the little bridge that went over the stream and Vidosava, intending, as many had already crossed, to see whether she and her father could still cross to the other side, stepped on to the bridge.

There is no blacker nor more fearful sin than to betray one's people.

Fearful is that sin, and it falls upon the innocent also!

Old Urosh called out:—

"My daughter, my only help, where are you? Where are you, unhappy Vida?"

But the water had already swept Vida away—the torrent carried her along—it carried her with force and the waves had swallowed her up. Vida had gone after her brothers.

Die, old man Urosh!

Be satisfied now, heavy curse!

Urosh, half dead, fell to the ground. He did not know when or how he was carried to his house; how he was put on his bed, or how long he lay there. When he had regained consciousness a little, there was vacancy in his breast, so that there was no longer illness or grief there. He only whispered now and then:—

"Take me, God, take me."

The torrent had born Vidosava away, the waves had swallowed her up; but it was not her lot to find peace so quickly.

It is easy to die in misfortune. Then death is beloved and precious; it is easy, sweet. But it is sad to stretch out the hands to cold death from a rosy life, from the wing of fortune.

As soon as Vida lost courage in the waves, she let her arms drop and gave herself up to cool death. Already consciousness of life had gone, already her tender heart had beat its last painful throbs, when powerful hands seized her round the waist, raised her, and gave her again to life.

The young Stevan Brovich of a neighouring village was the glory of the youth of the neighbourhood, a young man without an equal, full of life, full of heart, love and proud heroism, and brave as only a Serb can be. The young Stevan Brovich happened to be near when the water carried Vida away. He flew to the stream and, as though he were at a dance, he sprang to danger, to practically certain death.

Anyone looking on might have said two or three paternosters without knowing whether he was saying them for the preservation of Stevan and Vidosava, or for the repose of their souls.

Good fortune, however, came quickly, and the young man with the girl issued forth onto dry land.

In the pure air Vidosava recovered herself a little, and then with a wonderful, golden, heavenly glance, she looked at her deliverer. In this glance there was more sorrow than satisfaction. Stevan could never have desired a greater recompense and Vida's heart never troubled nor contracted. Both breathed silently. Feebleness, however, overcame the girl again, and she fell unconscious into Stevan's arms.

So they carried her home and put her on her bed, to tend her like the apple of their eyes, to treat her with every earthly and heavenly remedy, so that such a flower should not wither nor perish—a flower enshrined in the hearts of many, and which every acquaintance loved like his own soul.

This was the room into which we came before the beginning of the story, in which Vidosava had already been lying ill for two or three days.

The windows were covered so that the sun hardly penetrated through the green curtains. A holy quiet reigned in the room—you only heard Vida's laboured breathing. On the table wild thyme, lovage and other flowers, smelling sweetly, responded to her breathing, and responding to her breathing, smelt sweetly—as though they too were praying softly from their hearts for the sick girl.

These are mighty and chosen medicines—the father's prayer, deep and holy,—and Stevan's longings, heart-felt, powerful and full of hope.

Which will help Vida first, which will reach God first, which remedy will be the first to bring Vida back to health?

If only there were not on the earth heavy curses that fall upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty!

II

From that time Stevan was much changed. It was as though he had saved his good fortune from the water, he was so cheerful in his heart; or he only felt, perhaps, that he would be full of joy if Vida were soon restored to health. That she should look at him again with those eyes!—That glance for the sake of which he would ever be ready to spring to death.

The days passed by, and still Vidosava was ill. A very heavy fever burned through her blood, it carved many coloured pictures before her closed eyes, and played violently with her spirit and with her imagination, so that it was sad, and sometimes even fearsome, to listen to her sufferings.

Every morning at dawn Stevan came from his village to P———, and on his way he would pick the flowers of every kind, violet, blue, and white, that went so well beside the burning face of the sick girl.

Today Stevan came very early; but again he found the old father on his feet—full of attention to his beloved daughter.

"Honoured father," said Stevan, kissing the grey old man's hand," last night I did not shut my eyes, I had no sleep. I am more ill than that dear invalid. See, I have come to you before dawn. You will not cure me, but it will be much easier for me if you will hear me out."

"Speak, my son," said the old man. "Who should I hear if I do not hear you. I have you now in place of all my five sons. God sent you to save my darling for me."

"Kind father, I am not a spoilt stranger full of tears and sighs. It must be a powerful sickness that makes me complain; but I am going to groan like a coward. I am a Serb by up-bringing and by education—taught not to give in to my heart however much it drives, or however much it burns with desire; but ever since the time when I sprang to death and was saved from the open grave with Vidosava, I have not been myself, I hardly know myself. I can no longer control my heart. It has become strong, powerful, and headstrong, and I have become feeble, small, —nothing but, as it were, my heart's shadow that must go after it. I can no longer command any one desire or any one thought but that she should be mine. My heart is all Vida's, it is in her service and serves her. When I first looked into her heart I understood her spirit. From that moment onwards I saw that without that heart, without that spirit, without those eyes, without Vidosava, I could not live. It is easier for me now that I have told you a little. Vidosava will get well, it cannot be otherwise as God lives and is merciful. Then father,—is it not so, father?—then Vidosava will be mine for eternity."

While Stevan was speaking these words Vidosava

now and again sighed, and the old priest shook his head two or three times, and now a dark cloud came upon his forehead. He thought deeply, and in his blind eyes there glistened two pure drops.

Stevan, amazed at these disagreeable and baneful signs, looked impatiently to see when and what father Urosh would decide.

He waited for a long time, shivering with apprehension, until he heard these words from the old man:—

"My son, where are you? Sit down beside me. If I cannot see you, I can at least embrace you. There! There! You are very dear to me and I must grieve you exceedingly. How fortunate it would be if the blessing of God were to fall upon you, how fortunate if you had been created one for the other! Who would desire it as much as I! But listen to me, and then judge, and think over, and consider, what you have heard, and what you can do.

"My name is Urosh Brankovich. I am a Serb in body and in spirit, and my origin has always caused me unhappiness, has always hurt me; but I have always comforted myself with thinking that Vuk's sin was not my sin, and I have tried with all my power to wash the disgrace from his family. All my five sons I adjured to live for nothing but their race; and if they felt in themselves any drops of Vuk's blood,

to put the fiercest serpent to their hearts to suck out that poison from them.

"'To love your people, that is everything for a Serb,' I said to them.

"'Tread fortune, tread salvation under your feet, if they do not accord with this.'

"My sons obeyed me. Would that they were alive! With them my face would never have become darkened.

"On Vidov's day—my darling Vidosava was born at the very moment her mother died. We received her into black swathing bands. She came into the world to lose her mother. Wonderfully was the child born, and wonderful she always was. At four years old she knew more than another child of eight. She never cried until she saw the picture of Vuk Brankovich that had been in our hands from ancient times. Then she shrieked as though she were in the heat of a furnace.

"Later, I do not know where, she learnt that sad poem of Kossovo, of the betrayal. She would sing that poem perpetually with a sorrowful voice, and her face steadily became more pale.

"Her gracious smile did not dare to play upon her beautiful little lips, her fine eyes sometimes were still, then clouded and suffused with tears, as though she were reaching out into the sad past or into the future. If anyone asked her:—

"'What is it, Vida—in God's name!' She would answer solemnly but shortly:—

"'The curse.'

"A year ago, Milan, my eldest son, wooed a girl and came happily to the house. Vida went out to meet him.

"'O my unhappy brother, are you really happy? How can a Brankovich be happy. Milan, Milan, there is no blacker sin than to betray one's people. Milan, Milan, the curse is heavy—the curse that falls upon the innocent also.'

"She said this, and kissed him, just as one kisses the dead.

"That very day Milan fell ill. The second day he died.

"Shortly after this she sprang up from sleep calling out:—

"'Vlajko, brother Vlajko, where is my Vlajko? Heavy is the sin that falls upon the innocent also!'

"That spring Vlajko's bay horse came into the courtyard without Vlajko; and Vlajko, out hunting, had fallen head foremost, and had remained dead at the place where he had fallen.

"In the same way she foretold or anticipated the deaths of Mirko and Radmilo.

"From that time onwards I looked upon her as some kind of mysterious person. I believed whatever she said, even though it were most fearful.

"I often said to her—'Do not speak, do not anticipate, if you know God. I love you as I love the memory of my four sons—more than life, than my soul; but it is a heavy sorrow to hear such tidings from one I love so much.'

"At this she would say to me:—

" 'You love me, you are fond of me? It is hard for whoever cares for me and for whoever falls in love with me. I am of evil fortune. Fearful is the sin that falls upon the innocent also!'

"Then she would look into my eyes and would say:—

" 'Now the young Djordje and Jovan Brankovich perpetually appear to me with vacant holes where their fair eyes had been. Behind them, see! Another Djordje, Grgurn Brankovich all blind with bloody eyelids! My father, my father, and you too are a Brankovich!'

"When I heard that I trembled, but it was in vain, and shortly afterwards eternal darkness fell upon the pupils of my eyes.

"One morning my last son Damjan came to me and kissed my hand.

" 'Beloved father,' he said to me, 'My days too are numbered. Last night I heard her weeping terribly in her sleep and two or three times she called my name. Father save me!'

" 'Who will save you if God will not forgive,' I

said. 'My Damjan it will not be good fortune.'—See now what kind of good it has been! All my five sons, one beside the other, are in the earth, in the grave. They have taken away my house from me, my bed."

The old man was silent.

And Stevan? The old man's words stupefied him and cast him into a sea of deep thoughts. He quickly pulled himself back, however, and recovered himself; and then he felt nothing but how strongly he loved Vidosava. He felt that whether the sick girl meant good or evil fortune for him, nothing could separate him from her.

"As you love me, old Brankovich, I have been with you in the prison of Eger for twenty-two years and you have never kissed me—you have had no time! Up to the present we have reckoned the unfortunate ones of the Brankovich family and have we reckoned them all? No—we have not yet. But let us leave it. We have nearly come to the end—But quickly! Kiss me once. It falls sweetly. It is sweet! Quick! Quick!

Stevan bent down to kiss the girl's outstretched hand. At that moment Vida opened her eyes and called out wildly:—

"You are not a Brankovich! Do not pull me out of the water! Leave me to death! Leave me, leave me, and may good fortune be yours!"

After this she again closed her eyes, sighed, and sobbed.

Through her sobs now and again could be distinguished:—

. . . . *to betray one's people* . . .
Fearful is that sin, and it falls upon the innocent also!

III.

The flowers were half withered, the golden leaves had fallen. It was a death bed on which summer had just breathed her last.

The sun was glimmering feebly, then slowly it became enveloped in mist.

The birds still sang a little, but it was not like the happy chirping that one hears in May. In every sound there was a note of "goodbye" and through every "goodbye" trembled a sorrowful "alas."

A cold wind rustled the countless grey leaves. This was the throne on which the new ruler—Autumn, the mournful queen, sat and slept.

They had already gathered the vintage in Frushka Gora and the vintage songs were silent, and the great resounding clappers no longer made a sound, but lay quietly somewhere behind the stove. In place of their sound the wind bore only the whistling of the yellow leaves and the heavy breaking of dry branches.

It was only the stream that had not forgotten its murmuring and still sang its song with the same voice. But how different it is to listen to its song accompanied by the song of the nightingale and the smell of the violet on the green flowery meadow, from what it is now; when, left alone, it sings because sing it must: but it would be better to say it weeps for its beloved companions who have vanished.

Round the house of old Brankovich spread a large garden. Beauty at one time had walked through it, while there appeared on every bed, on every bush and on every branch a delicate hand that tended it all. Now all the paths were overgrown, the beds unweeded. Disorder grew and trampled down all that pains and good will had formerly beautified.

There walked Vidosava in black clothing. It appeared on her face that she had been seriously ill, but that charming beauty of hers, steeped in pallour, always gave one the impression of looking at moonlight.

The time was mournful and ill-omened, but Vida steadily became happier. She wept for her brothers; but a certain belief that the loss of them was inevitable softened the bitterness of her tears, and gave strength to her tender heart. That prophetic spirit, if I may so call it, that had troubled the beautiful child was dead—had vanished. But in addition to this her sweetness had grown, and Vidosava steadily became a true girl, such as she ought to have been.

But can a girl be without love?

As a violet must smell sweet, so a heart must sigh.

The violet itself does not know that it smells sweet.

And why did Vidosava sigh now? She sighed because everything had turned out so sweetly for her. She sighed, but she herself did not know why.

Stevan, who came to visit old Urosh almost every day, had just dismounted. He walked through the garden with Vidosava, with her he spoke of every kind of beauty and grace, with her he sat on a marble bench looking at the red clouds round the sun, calling her "little sister."

Vida did not believe that she had the right to love Stevan. Some pitiless spirit still whispered to her:—"Send this young man away from you. It would be a shame that he should fall under the curse!"

But something stirred in her heart—it was so sweet and so heavy—. It was difficult!

Already there appeared in the distance a cloud of dust that the fierce black horse of Stevan had raised. Vidosava looked in that direction and sighed involuntarily. Afterwards, if you had happened to be close at hand, you would have heard a charming but mournful voice and the mournful song:—

"Whether they are griefs, or whether they are sorrows,

Griefs are worse than sorrows.

Neighbours will come for sorrows

But no one knows about griefs
Save the heart in which are the griefs."

How steadily he became sweeter and more beloved every day!

Love grew, and why could not good fortune grow beside it?

It was a blessing for old Urosh that in his blindness he saw something that he had never been able to see with his eyes. He saw that every day his daughter was more happy and more cheerful.

"Something smells sweet here," said Urosh one evening when Stevan and Vidosava had led him through the garden.

"It is that great bush of rosemary," responded Vidosava.

"And there must also be a seat of turf. Let us sit down, children, and smell that beautiful scent. Isn't it beautiful, Stevan, and what do you say, my Vidosava?"

Rosemary was a fortunate symbol. It guided their thoughts and guided their words, and they spoke of earthly joys, of love, and of faithfulness.

All three were suddenly constrained. They grew silent, lost in thought.

Only one word, and all three hearts would immediately become happier.

The old man, however, did not intend to begin, and

Stevan's throat was contracted. Vidosova sat beside the old man, and sometimes looked at her father's face, sometimes at the war of thought and annulling of desire on the face of the young man. She did not know in the least what to think, and trembled like a reed, fearing the first word that should be spoken.

Lost in thought the old man took hold of Stevan's hand just exactly at the place where there was a gold ring on his finger.

"What kind of a ring is that, Stevan?"

"My mother gave it to me on her death bed and made me promise that one day I would put it on the finger of my betrothed. And—in God's name. . . "

At these words Stevan burned like living fire, and the pale girl became even more pale, like the most beautiful white rose.

"And in God's name I will either wear the ring myself until the grave, or you will take it, Vida."

Oh fortune, how golden you are, and love, you have been beautifully prepared. By these moments you have overweighed all the misfortune and evil that attack a man!

The rosemary smelt sweet, how beautifully, how strongly, how tenderly!

The sun sank down reflected in the sweet tears of blind Urosh and in the ring on Vidosava's hand.

When the happy ones separated, each one was cal-

culating within himself how many days there were until that famous Saint George's Day.

IV

What preparations were made for that famous Saint George's Day? How did Stevan and Vidosava pass the time?

Wild winter had come,—those hard frosts, snow storms, and falls of snow had come,—and those cold winds.

This was not winter, neither were they frosts nor winds! It was not fierce, or hard, or cold, or frosty!

To our betrothed pair it was as though rosy snow had fallen, as though a little rose had been torn up in the sky. Frost does not freeze warm love, and the winds brought it that beautiful peace that nothing else feels—brought it from somewhere, God knows where, the sweet smell of rosemary, the flower so dear to them.

Then those winter evenings!

Quiet joy, peaceful happiness, full satisfaction! When Bozana, Vida's old nurse, sat near the stove and began those old stories, so that trembling seizes you, your hair clings together, your heart burns, and your tears flow. If she stops for a little you hear her spindle buzzing, just as a guslar breaks off his song at the most beautiful places—to play what cannot be

sung, because it can only be felt. On the plain the gun is fired, the horse neighs, the greyhound gives short barks. Here is Stevan from the hunt—just as though he had come alive out of the old story:—

"God help you, my fortune!—" and the candle dances and trembles—and old Urosh's tears overflow.

How was it with Vidosava, with the beautiful betrothed? Many of my readers will know better than I can express it.

When he came to the house and Vidosava received him, he would whisper to her, almost ashamed, "How many days are there still before Saint George's Day?"

Very little happened until Saint George's Day. The winter passed as in a dream.

The flowers and leaves burst forth ever more beautifully, and the voices of nightingales came ever sweeter and sweeter; but more beautiful than their voices was what the day brought to Vidosava:—

"My Darling!

"You know how much I love you; but it is sweet to me to speak of it. You are my world, my life, my all. The day after tomorrow will dawn, the day when you will not blush to sanctify your love before the altar, and to give yourself to me before God and the world. Tomorrow will bring the wedding guests to you. The wedding guests have been chosen, everything is fitting, happy and worthy.

"Be happy and rejoice, my bride,
"Your true Stevan."

Do you know that beautiful flower on whose slender green stalk hang delicate pale little green cups? The cups when they are overturned pour forth a beautiful scent, and the scent pours forth like a river, and over it, it is as though invisible vilas were floating and singing:—

"Georgica, where thou art sown,
There thou art plucked.
It is beautiful, it is holy, it is wonderful,
Saint George's Day."

The Lily of the Valley is the flower, and Bozana entwined it in Vidosava's hair, and how beautifully it went with that luxuriant, silken hair. And the old nurse spoke to her:—

"There, there, my pigeon. Now you are adorned like that maiden of flowers about whom I am always telling you, whom seven emperors sought. But why are you so mournful when you should be most full of joy?"

"Dear nurse, I must tell you a strange and disquieting dream I dreamt. I was dressed just as I am now, and I was walking across the room, when a stern voice called to me to stop. I looked up and

saw that I was standing exactly under the picture of our unfortunate ancestor. I was quite trembling and he raised his hand, took hold of the frame and slowly came out of it,—and the place he left empty was red like blood. When he came to me he said:—

" 'My daughter, you are a bride. There—let me bless you, and give you a present.' Then he made a movement behind my precious ring and took it from my finger.

" 'This diamond,' he said, 'I will take away, it looks like a crystalized tear. Here is a more beautiful stone for you, this ruby which is a drop of Serbian blood from the field of Kossovo. I will put it into your ring for you. It will last better and there shall be blessing in it for you!'

"After this he was returned to his place and became again the same old picture as he has always been. Sweet nurse I still tremble if I remember it vividly, and I dare not say a word to my father."

And Vidosava was all trembling and, as before, there appeared again in her heart, written in black, the words:—

There is no blacker nor more fearful sin than to betray one's people.

Fearful is that sin, and it falls upon the innocent also!

V

"The swaying branch broke off."*

The fierce horses are already girthed—white, black, and grey, and they are not quiet but are kicking with their feet. On them the fine white trappings are vibrating.

Quick let us get on our way!

Quick let us get on our way!

But still the dance cannot be broken up—the dance that had, as it were, grown out of their happiness—and how can Vidosava turn her back upon her dear father!

There were tears—they were never bitter. There were blessings, and may God accept them.

But the happy, frolicsome wedding guests cared nothing for this and made themselves ready, singing:—

"Do not weep, fair Vida, for the time has come.
It was not in your court that the sweetness was born,
But it was in ours that the sweetness was born—
Hero Stevan."

So they whipped up the four white horses on which

* A line of a popular song.

were Vidosava with the chief wedding guest, and the other wedding guests behind them. There arose a cry, a tumult such as there had never been. After a single moment not even dust could be seen, because Serbian wedding guests do not go upon the ground, but fly.

Vacancy and quiet remained round the old man Urosh.

The whole time the path led the wedding guests beside the Danube. On one side were high mountains and vineyards, and on the other side rocks which the cold Danube washed.

Vidosava was as pale as though now her dream of the night before were founded on fact.

The sun was nearly in the west, and its beautiful rays played among the standards and plumes, and gilded the guns and arms, and when it fell upon the precious stone in Vidosava's ring, every kind of colour burst forth in it. Now it would be like the blue of the upper part of the sky such as only angels see: now like violets such as there are not in the world; now like an orange, such as only a thirsty Persian woman, sleeping on the lap of her lover could dream of. Sometimes, again, red, rosy, exactly like that blood spilt on Kossovo.

It was at just such a moment that Vidosava looked at her ring.

She cried out like an angry serpent in a cleft:—

"Blood, mighty blood. . . . it is. . . . "

And the unhappy girl let her head fall upon the chief wedding guest. The chief wedding guest sprang down to stop the horses—as though anyone could stop horses at their highest speed. The horses began to wince and to jump aside.

At that very moment fierce Turkish officials came up, firing the charges from their pistols. No more was necessary.

The Danube echoed as though thunder had convulsed it. The maddened horses bore the unfortunate bride into a cold grave.

All this took place in one moment.

The wedding guests were petrified. A shudder went through their hearts; but by this time Stevan was already in the Danube, having sprung to death to bear life and fortune out of it as was evilly foretold.

The water cast out both of them.

Still only one embrace—but what warmth in it. Still just one whisper, but it was laboured and fearful because it was spoken in the lap of death.

"Did I not say, Stevan? Indeed I did—that the curse was heavy. But forgive me!"

Already twenty swimmers were swimming swiftly to drag them out and save them, but what can a man do against heavy curses, against the ordinance of God?

Stevan and Vidosava lie deep in the Danube in their embrace, and their souls deserve to be happier in that place where old Urosh came soon after them.

I had already entirely forgotten this story just as though I had never heard it; but some years ago I was in Novi Sad at a funeral. The dead man was a count; but he died without a single relation, a blind, poor man—quite blind—and he was called Brankovich. That was perhaps the last branch of the family.

Then I remembered—and it was as though I heard Vidosava's voice speaking sorrowfully to a mighty people gathered together:—

"There is no blacker sin than to betray one's people.

Fearful is that sin, and it falls upon the innocent also!"

THE FIRST FURROW

By Milovan Glisich

Milovan Glisich was born in 1847 at Valjevo, Serbia. He took the philosophical course at the University of Belgrade and became editor of the *Journal Officiel* there and later on Assistant Director of the National Theatre in the same city. He died in 1908. Glisich translated a number of Russian and French novels by Gogol, Tolstoy and Mérimée and many plays, principally French comedies. He also wrote two comedies which are the most popular plays in the repertoire of every Serbian theatre. He was the author of a number of stories, mostly humorous ones.

THE FIRST FURROW

By Milovan Glisich

I

At the end of the village of Vellica Vrbnica, high up near the mountain of Vratana, there can be seen from Latkovacki Pogledi, a modest peasant's cottage with two or three other little buildings grouped around it.

This is the house of the widow Miona.

Sibin Dzamich was killed in the second war, behind Jankova Klisura.

Stories are still told of his exploits and of his courage, and whenever anyone speaks of Sibin at Velika, they always say,

"May God keep Him"

His Miona was left alone with three orphans, two sons and a daughter. They stood very close on the steps of the ladder. Ognjan the eldest was only seven.

There can be no greater misfortune for a peasant household than to be left without a head.

The same sorrow had fallen on many other homes in the countryside. Many other widows had mourned their husbands, and been consoled. After a year or two, some had remarried and taken their children with them into the new home, others had gone back to their own families.

Sibin's Miona would not follow the example of her companions in misfortune. Courageous, intelligent and hardworking, she undertook to do even the heaviest of the farm work.

It seemed to Miona that her Sibin would come back, and how could she face him if he found his house deserted and in ruins?

Sibin had brothers and relatives, but none of them had lived with him. They were all industrious people, sympathetic and kind hearted and no day passed that one of them did not come to Miona's house to help her a little in her work.

It was Sibin's younger brother Jelenko who rendered her the most service. How many times did he not say to his sister-in-law.

"Why will you not listen to me, my sister? Why will you not come to our house? Can't you see, my poor sister, that with three children you can never get through all this? You don't know what to do first. With a hundred arms you could not do everything,—just you alone. Why not come and live with us, at least until the children are big and strong?"

"I cannot, brother," answered Miona, sighing.

"But why not? In our house everything would be easier and more comfortable for you."

"But brother, how can I let the fire go out on this hearth, where my children were first warmed? What should I say to my children by and by when they ask

me, 'Mother what is that house, smothered with alders and weeds, which no one goes to even by day?' If I should do that the bread and salt that I ate with Sibin would bring me sorrow. God preserve me from it! Never, brother, never."

Jelenko could do nothing but shrug his shoulders, and go and borrow a pair of horses to plough and harrow as much land as Miona needed for sowing.

These good people always helped her with the work that was too heavy for a woman's weaker hands. They ploughed part of her fallow land, harrowed and sowed it, and prepared it for the crop as carefully as if the fields were their own. Miona did all the rest herself. She hoed, weeded and harvested. She never complained that the work was too hard. When her family wanted to help with that also, she was almost hurt. She always thanked them, and said, "You helped me through the most difficult part. This I can do quite alone."

II

The years passed, one after another, and Miona grew so accustomed to her task that she felt that for her there could be no other kind of life. Her children had grown bigger. Ognjan was almost fifteen and going to school. He was already a big strong lad. Dusanka was thirteen and took most of the household

cares from her mother's shoulders. If Miona went out early to the fields or the pastures to gather a few more sheaves or to pile in cocks the hay that Jelenko had mowed the day before, she found her dinner ready when she came back to the house at noon. Dusanka had prepared it as well as any farmer's wife, and she even knew how to make bread. The youngest boy, Senadin, was nine. He still made popguns out of the alders, but he knew how to take care of the lambs, and to lead the sheep to pasture, and he, too, made himself useful.

God be thanked, all of Miona's children were healthy, happy, intelligent and industrious. Miona's heart overflowed as she looked at them.

"My lovely birds," she whispered, sighing, "God All powerful, I beseech you to keep me in health and strength until their wings are stronger."

God is good. He granted the prayer of the lonely widow. The men of the village admired Miona's perseverance. They all praised her, and used her as an example to their wives, when they had to reprove them for their moments of idleness. One thing only surprised them, why she, being alone, should send Ognjan to school, and deprive the household of his help. They even almost blamed Miona for this, and Jelenko spoke to her about it. One day, when he was at her house with his old uncle Jedzimir, and they had discussed a quantity of things, he said to his sister-in-law;

"Really, everyone is surprised at what you are doing. You are hardworking, you are sensible, and yet you are committing a folly."

"But what, brother?" she asked, looking at him, a little startled.

"Why do you not keep that child at home to help you in the lighter work? Many people richer than you, and with larger families, find it impossible to spare their children. You are poor and suffering, and yet —"

"I will never allow my children to be the worst brought up in the village, brother" answered Miona, flushing a little, "my Sibin, whom God keep, often planned that if nothing happened to him, we would make Ognjan study. I am fulfilling his wishes. I have worked hard for so many years, it will do me no harm to struggle a little longer."

"That is true, my niece," said old Jedzimir, in his turn. "That is all fine and good, but on the other hand, you are alone in the house, and for you any aid, however small, is of value."

"Ognjan will finish his school in July, and after that will stay with me. If God keeps us in good health, I shall send Senadin to school next autumn. I don't want my children to be blind even though they have eyes." She spoke with conviction, and so firmly that Jelenko and Jedzimir had nothing to say. They talked a little of other things and then went away.

"That is no woman, that is a man," said Father Jedzimir softly as they left Miona's house.

III

Lent had begun and winter was nearing it's end. The harsh east wind, Ustoka, and the icy north wind, Sever, no longer blew. The wind from the south, Beli-Vetar, played with the branches of the great beech trees, coming from Zupa and going even as far as Neredja and Kapaonik. The snow was almost all gone and only what lay on Suho Rudiste paid no attention to Beli-Vetar; that would not melt till later, under the heat of June.

On every side the diligent farmers were out in the fields. They turned over the fallow land, and sang as they worked, hoping for a good year.

It was noon when Miona got back from the town where she had gone to see Senadin.

She had kept her word. Ognjan had graduated from the first class at the feast of St. Peter, and shortly after the Transfiguration, Senadin had entered the fourth class.

Miona was climbing up through the orchard, when Dusanka came suddenly out of the house. She had something rolled up in a little many-coloured bag, and was hurrying somewhere.

"Where are you going Dusanka?"

"Oh, is it you, have you come back so soon?" Dusanka answered, a little confused. "That is lucky, because the house will not be left empty. I am going to meet my brother."

"Yes, and where is he?"

"In the field, down beyond the clearing. He told me to bring him his lunch."

"Isn't he coming back to the house to eat?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"He took the oxen and the plough."

"Oh," cried Miona, "and why did you not tell me that at once, my dear scatter-brain child? Give me the little bag, I will take it to him."

"No, let me mother, you are tired, and beside—,"

"Beside what, my child?"

"My brother begged me not to tell you right away. He said, 'I want to give pleasure to my mother.' "

"May God give him back that pleasure! I am not tired, child, I did not even know that I had come back so quickly. It was not quite nice of you not to tell me right away. See how late it is, already past noon. Has he been gone long?"

"He can hardly have reached the field yet."

Miona snatched up Dusanka's bag, glanced into it to see what was prepared, and hurried quickly away. Dusanka, surprised, stood at the door and watched her mother go.

IV

The field beyond the clearing needs only one day's ploughing. The ground is not very fertile, and even in good years, the harvest is never more than two or three stacks of wheat.

Ognjan had ploughed the first furrow, and was about to start again, when suddenly his mother appeared.

"Ah! just see how my boy works," cried Miona happily. Running to Ognjan she began to embrace and kiss him. The boy stood still, a little taken aback.

"May your labour be fortunate, my master. What a superb furrow, and how deep it is! Oh, I am silly, I chatter when you are tired, my worker! Here, take this, it was your sister who prepared your lunch for you."

Miona quickly emptied the bag of all that it contained, spread it out, and placed on it a little salt, some onions, cooked potatoes, a small loaf, a bowel of pea soup, and a small gourd of wine; saying as she did so;

"Ah, see what a girl Dusanka is! She has even put in wine. My daughter is growing up! She already knows what will be good for a tired man. Stop your plough, my son, you have worked enough."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"What is the matter, mother?" asked Ognjan, as he sat down. "You are crying."

"It is nothing, my son, nothing. See, I am laughing. Take some food, I know that you are hungry. The truth is that I was delayed a little in the town. You don't know how pleased the schoolmaster is with our Senadin!"

"You sit down too, mother, so that we can eat together" said Ognjan, breaking off a piece of the loaf for her.

"No, my son, I will eat at the house. Dusanka is waiting for me" answered Miona, still standing and almost waiting on her son. "You think perhaps that I am tired, Ognjan, but I am not. I can be all day on my feet. But look at my son! He works like a grown man! Dusanka told me, but I thought she was joking, the little scamp."

Again her eyes filled with tears. She wiped them away with her hands, and laughed.

Ognjan was almost shy. He flushed, and wanted to say something, but did not know what.

Miona offered him the food again.

She began to talk to him as if to a child, but still always standing before him. She said that she would keep the wheat from that field to use only for feast days. She would make from it the cesnica, the Christmas biscuit, and that kolac cake which is made only for the Slava. The best flour is made from old grain.

"If the seed will only sprout!" said Ognjan, "You know well, mother, that this field is one of our least

fertile ones. The grain from here is almost always rotted."

"Oh, it will sprout, my son, it must sprout! There is no better ground, even in Morava. Here, there has never been either rot or tares."

Ognjan finished eating, got up, took the plough again, and gave the oxen a couple of blows with his pole.

Miona stood watching her son, who hopped about like a young cock, pulling the ploughhandles and balancing the plough, sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other. This is difficult work, and the boy's arms were still weak.

Several times Miona longed to run and help him, but something held her back, she knew not what.

She packed the little bag again, and went slowly back to the house.

How often she turned to look back at Ognjan. She could still see him when he was turning the third furrow.

A strange new joy seized her. She wanted to cry and to laugh. She did not know why. After a little while she whispered to herself, "It is my turn, this time, for God should give me joy. Am I not happy! Who could think otherwise! Oh, how happy I am! I have a son, I have a master! The hands of others will work for me no longer. No, no one has such a child. How he works! Jelenko himself could not

do better. He is a man already. In one or two years, if God is willing, I shall have him married. My house will sing again."

Dusanka never remembered having seen her mother so cheerful as when she returned from the field beyond the clearing.

She came into the house, humming a gay little song.

BY THE WELL

By Lazar Lazarovich

Lazar Lazarovich was born in 1851 at Labach, (Serbia), a town which was completely destroyed in 1914 during the great war. He completed his law course at Belgrade and then his medical course at Berlin and was a practicing physician throughout his life, first in the country and then in Belgrade. He was elected a corresponding member of the Serbian Royal Academy.

Lazarovich was the author of a dozen short stories which aroused the most immense enthusiasm among the public and founded the realistic school of Serbian fiction. He died in 1890.

BY THE WELL

By Lazar Lazarovich

I

How the wind blows! so that great clouds of mist are quivering above the furrows like whitish phantoms. They are borne along in the direction in which the wind is blowing, and then they hang in thin white crystals, like pendants, to one's beard and moustaches and to one's horse's coat.

I shall go to the house of Matija Djenadich. That is his house, there, with the wooden flask of brandy hanging out on the plum tree in front of it. "Whoever passes, let him taste." That is what Matija wishes; and when you come to his house they receive you with open arms.

What a house it is! A regular old-fashioned *Ladruga.** Come in the evening when they are expecting you. One of the sons' wives meets you on the very road with a torch in her hand, a second stands in the orchard, a third in front of the store-house, a fourth

* The Ladruga has a common *ménage* and represents a very strong association. No member possesses any property of his own, all goods belonging to the family as a whole. Each member of the community has a fixed duty to perform, and the entire family is ruled by an elder, who is almost always its oldest member. He decides where the young men are to go and what they are to do. He has charge of the selling of all that is saleable, he keeps the money-box and attends to the payment of taxes. His authority is undisputed.

beats off the dogs, a fifth is in the kitchen, a sixth in the room into which they take you. A whole assemblage of wedding guests! And everything in their house is happy, modest, and content. God grant, though, that you do not cross any member of the household, for six of the sons are in the army!

They have no need of their neighbours to help them —why should they, with so many hands? They can plough three ploughs continuously without an effort; and when merchants come to buy the pigs, Matija's belt becomes comfortably fat.

I knew their Arsen when he was a boy. He would take his flute from his belt and screech beside Burmazovich's house, for there was a girl there, a daughter. And what a girl! If you rode alongside her and, as the saying is, she turned her dark eyes in your direction, the world turned around you and you could hardly keep your saddle.

But Arsen got used to her eyes and was not afraid of them. He put his foot on one rail of the fence, his elbow on another, rested his face in the palm of his hand and spoke to her:

"I am ashamed to mention it to father, and, as for grandfather, I simply dare not."

Anoka was not confused, as she should have been. She looked out craftily from her eyes, turned a little aside and, hiding her anger, said:

"Very well then. I shall marry Philip Maricich!"

"What! Do you think I will give you up to anyone else? I assure you that the man who so much as touched you with his finger would not have one bone left unbroken in his body!"

Anoka tapped on the ground with her foot like a spoilt child. She swelled out her breast, her eyes glittered, and she tossed her head:

"Really? And perhaps you wish me to plait my grey hairs? You shall see!"

But Arsen heard no more. He seized her by the hand and drew her towards the fence and to him. She resisted firmly, but all the same came forward, nearer and nearer—a mysterious fire overcoming her as the man's hand encircled her waist.

A good sort of girl she was, but Burmazovich had spoilt her terribly. So many of his family had died at the time of the cholera that he had cherished Anoka, like a little water in the palm of his hand.

One should not spoil a child and give it its way, even though it be the only child in the world.

That evening Arsen came home lost in thought. Contrary to his custom, he first went to the store-room and, with a wine-taster, he drank freely from a barrel. Normally he never drank.

Next he sat down on a bench alone in the darkness and looked at the life in the courtyard. The fire was flickering with a red flame at the kitchen door—it licked the saucepan and the chains on which it sung.

The fire seemed even to reach Arsen himself. He felt a certain warmth and wondered how such a thing could be, that the flame from the kitchen should actually warm him. Now and again black pictures of men and dogs in the courtyard passed by the fire. From the stable sounded the stamping of a horse; in front of the storeroom the oxen, with which Nenad had just come from town, were being unyoked. A hen plumped down from the mulberry tree and settled among her companions with much fluttering. Every noise sounded clearly through the evening silence. A mouse dared already to start nibbling under the very log on which Arsen was sitting.

His head began to swim. At first he heard, under his left breast, his heart beating as though something had frightened him. Then all at once he began to laugh, without reason, madly.

He knew not why he laughed, nor yet why, immediately afterwards, he burst into tears. He only knew that through his laughter and through his tears Anoka appeared in a dim picture, and this beat so wonderfully upon his heart that it seemed to him that now he would die. He leaned upon the barrel from which he had drunk a short time before and began to die, but so sweetly that it seemed to him as though Anoka were embracing him and as though the wild horse of the Ostojich were carrying him.

He slept there for a little while; then Velinka, one

of his sisters-in-law, came in with a torch in her hand to look for something in the store-room. She started when she caught sight of Arsen on the log besides the barrel with the wine-taster in his hand. She approached him timidly and touched his shoulder.

"Darling!"

Arsen opened bloodshot eyes.

"You are drunk, poor boy!"

He agreed cheerfully.

"Yes, drunk!"

"But why?"

"Why? Because I want to kill Philip Maricich!"

He waved the wine-taster above his head, struck it on the ground, broke it, and began to laugh.

This made Velinka laugh also.

"But why, darling? What has Philip done to you?"

"He wishes to marry Anoka!"

"Well? Let him marry her!"

"I will never let him!"

He threw himself forward a little and wished to get up, but his back found the companionship of the barrel so pleasant that it obstinately returned to its former position.

Velinka restrained her laughter.

"But why, darling? Do you wish to marry her yourself?"

"Certainly I do."

And when he had said this, he was embarrassed; he turned himself towards the barrel, began to cry and to speak through his tears.

"Yes. Has not my brother married? I also wish ——."

He tried to strike his knee in emphasis of this, but his fist, without question or permission, struck the log. As a punishment he thrust it between his teeth and bit it.

Velinka laughed all the more.

"There, there, poor child. Then you *shall* marry, darling. Don't be afraid. I will speak to father this evening and he will speak to grandmother and then grandmother will arrange the affair with grandfather as it ought to be. Come along, let me take you to your room so that grandfather shall not see you like this. Poor fellow; go to sleep! Don't worry—we'll find a girl for you, even if it is Anoka you wish for."

"I do wish it, indeed I do."

The sister-in-law led the drunken youth through the house in the dark to his room. She covered him with the coverlet and went to the kitchen to tell her sisters-in-law what had happened.

Not one rejoiced at the news. They laughed, it is true, but the smiles did not come from the heart.

"She is not for our house!"

"A coquette!"

"That is not the worst, but a regular spoilt child, God help us!"

"She would make mischief amongst us!"

Matija Djenadich was an old man. On his forehead could still be seen the scar of the wound he got in the entrenchments of Hajduk Veljko. The whole village, as well as his own family, called him grandfather. His wife died long ago in the retreat, but his elder brother's wife was still left and she now divided the headship of the family with him. Her name was Radojka. She sat at the table on the grandfather's right hand, and nothing of real importance was decided in the house until she had given her opinion, or at least until the grandfather had asked it. She understood her position thoroughly and did not abuse it. The grandfather, for example, would ask:

"What do you say, sister-in-law, about Maricich's enclosure? Shall we take it?"

"As you decide, brother. Yours is the man's head."

She kissed the grandfather's hand; and all the rest, both men and women, kissed hers, although this was not generally the custom in the village.

In addition to Matija and Radojka, there was another member of the family council—the grandfather's eldest son, Blagoje, Arsen's father. Except for these three, no one was consulted about anything in the household, but all cheerfully obeyed. If, however,

Matija took the taxes, Radojka went to church and Blagoje to bed down the stock—the house was like a school when the teacher has gone away. Everything was friendly, happy and pleasant, and everyone looked upon this as an occasion for a good joke and a laugh. When, however, any one of the three reappeared at the door, solemnity, order and submission were established immediately. Sometimes the three would conceal themselves on purpose that the children might be merry, and that the men might smoke tobacco without constraint.

The grandfather was—was—how shall I tell you? You know—an old man—nearly a child. Sometimes he would become furious on the very smallest provocation—rage, abuse, fire up and even wish to strike. Sometimes, again, soft as cotton wool, he would seek only to kiss the children, would give them as much as ten paras and burst into tears for no reason at all.

He would say, for example, "See! I am left like a withered tree in the mountain," and would fall into lamentation.

Youth, folly; old age, feebleness; as the Serbs say.

The day after Arsen's drinking, Blagoje came to Radojka with a very solemn face.

"Aunt, our Arsen has fallen in love with that spaniel of Burmazovich's."

"Arsen? The one we made a man of this summer?"

"The same."

"That spaniel, you say, of Burmazovich's?"

"Yes."

"Anoka?"

"Yes."

"She is not for our house!"

"No. And I said so, but he has fallen in love with her very violently. Velinka told me last night that he did something shameful."

"What?"

"Do not tell grandfather, promise!"

"Certainly not."

"Well, Velinka says he was drunk and that he raged and threatened to kill Philip Maricich—for he, you know . . . visits there!"

The grandmother considered. At last she answered:

"I will speak to grandfather to see what he will say."

"You will not mention, please, anything about the other thing?"

"God be with you."

When Radojka told the whole story to the grandfather afterwards, he thought and thought. At last his eyebrows moved.

"Sister, it is as you say. But I have heard from old men that one should not restrain children in such matters. We have a large house, thanks be to God. I believe that there are no less than eighty souls in it."

"There are, certainly, and more."

"There are? Thanks be to God! I should think this one would take after the other children."

"God grant it!"

Some days after this Anoka said to one of her friends: "I knew that everything must go according to my wish. And indeed there is not such a girl as myself in nine villages." Then she drew from her bosom a case with a little looking-glass and began to arrange her curls.

It was a pity that, when she went to Djenadich's house, she still remained the same spoilt child she had been in her father's. She knew everything best. Always things had to be according to her will. She would not do as she was told. She would say: "I did not do that in my father's house!" or "Why should I knead bread for a Tsar's army? One loaf is enough for Arsen and me."

The women folk dared not speak. They complained sometimes to their husbands, but none ventured to mention anything to Radojka or to the grandfather.

For a long time they endured and concealed their discomfort. They worked entirely for Anoka and according to her wish. There was something commanding, tyrannical, in her bearing, so that you had to obey her. Perhaps it was her beauty also that dominated the women. Her sisters-in-law complained of her among themselves, but they protected and defended her before the elder people and before stran-

gers. God knows to what an extent they would have endured without a storm, had not Anoka, before she had been six months in the house, become utterly self-willed. It is impossible even to mention certain things she said; as, for instance, when they called her to plant cabbages, or when one of them asked her to look after her child. Finally she began to ask to be dressed differently and better than the others. The unfortunate Arsen said to her that his grandfather and Radojka bought all the clothes and that he dare not suggest to his grandfather to buy a new spangled bodice for her and not for the others. She answered that she had not married his grandfather, and that she would go to her father and ask him to buy her one, because her husband was a weakling "and had not the courage even to get her a pin without asking that greybeard." Arsen was in a terrible position. If only she would not look at him with those eyes of hers he would have had control over her. Sometimes he even put his hand to his belt, bit his pipe and seized his stick by the middle, but the moment she looked at him he stood at attention as though he were standing before a bishop.

So she became more and more uncontrolled and began purposely to flout them all. She let the dogs into the kitchen so that they cleared all the meat from the saucepan; she paid no attention when she turned the cock of the wine barrel; her bread was burned so

that the whole baking had to be thrown to the pigs; she wore holiday clothes on a working day; she did not so much as turn her head to see what the children were doing, and it was her fault that Jovanka's child fell into the quick-lime. There was not one of her sisters-in-law to whom she had not given an offensive nickname; she called Radojka an "old trollop," and the grandfather "the cholera." Each day there was greater trouble and annoyance, and when anyone said anything to her, she immediately threatened to return to her father. It was unbearable for the women, and on one occasion when Anoka, who ought to have been in charge, went to the fair, they met in secret council.

"I do not know, my sisters, how we have sinned against God that we should suffer this."

"Nor I, indeed."

"This really is ruin and misfortune."

"Things cannot remain like this, alas!"

"Let us tell grandmother and she will tell grandfather."

"You tell them, Selena."

"Why me?"

"Didn't she say to you that you had taken her bracelet?"

"Yes, but why? Didn't she say to you that your husband was a wild priest?"

"And she said to Mirjana that she came here from positive hunger."

"And to Velinka that her child was not her husband's."

But even then the women would hardly have made up their minds to speak, had not Radojka for a long time past both listened and watched what was happening, and had not Arsen himself, when Anoka tore her brand new bodice on the woodpile the very next day, gone to the grandfather with a complaint.

Arsen was a quiet man. From childhood he had learnt nothing beyond obedience. He was not even capable of selling wood unless they told him at home how much to ask for it and for how much to let it go.

The grandfather was sitting alone in his room when Arsen came in. As he could not do any other work he was shelling peas.

Arsen took off his cap and approached his grandfather.

The grandfather frowned. He did not raise his head nor give Arsen his hand. He only said drily: "May you live long!"

"Grandfather—I beg you—I—it's a shame for me to come here—but I cannot help it——"

The grandfather looked at him frowning.

"I—" continued Arsen, "—I had to come—do not be angry."

The grandfather lifted his head, threw away the basket of peas in his anger and cried:

"I know all that! And what kind of a man you

are! To have saddled yourself with that—that——"

He was silent for a little.

"With that—! To split up my house!"

Arsen, poor wretch, was petrified when he heard that his grandfather knew all. His voice forsook him:—

"I beg you, grandfather—I did not know . . . What shall I do? Forgive me!"

He sought to take his grandfather's hand. The grandfather drew his hand back.

"Keep off! Do not soil my hands! Are you really a man?"

Arsen turned his head away and covered his eyes with the sleeve of his coat.

"Do what you will with me and with her. Kill me and turn her out! God will forgive you! Only I beseech you, do not turn me away from you."

The grandfather's beard trembled a little. He wished to conceal his emotion. He straightened himself magisterially, raised his head towards the ceiling and bent down a little.

"You see, my son, you chose yourself. Did I say to you either do it, or don't do it?"

"No, most assuredly not. It is I alone who am guilty."

"And now it is for me to straighten out what you entangled?"

"For God, and then you."

"But how am I to do so?"

If Radojka had been there she would have noticed a look of childish cunning in the half-closed eyes of the old man.

"As God shows you——" said Arsen.

"And you—her . . . I mean—do you really dislike her?"

Arsen was confused. He would have liked to be silent, but his grandfather steadily looked him straight in the eyes.

"She is an obstinate person."

"I know, I know, but I ask you—do you care for her?"

Arsen was again silent. He would have liked to evade the question, but his grandfather steadily looked him in the eyes.

"It must be," said Arsen, "that her father absolutely spoilt her. You know, she was his only child."

The grandfather seemed to lose patience.

"Do you hear, I say, what I ask you? I ask you to tell me, do you love Anoka? Tell me that."

Arsen bent down his head. He covered his face with his hand and began to turn his shoulders from left to right with embarrassment. Drawling out his words he answered:

"I do not know."

"But you must know, because I must be ruled by

that, so that there shall not be something wrong again, and that you should say this and that."

"I shall say nothing."

"Good. Now go, and I will think it over."

Anyone who could read the grandfather's mind could have seen at once that he had already decided what to do, and that he was satisfied with his plan.

That evening when they were sitting at supper, the men were arranged according to their seniority, as was the custom. Except for Radojka not one of the women was there. They ate apart, save the two or three who served the men.

It happened to be Anoka's turn to serve.

While the other two carried the food in and out and served the drink, she leaned on the door with her shoulders and fingered her nose.

The grandfather did not look at her. They were all silent. As for Radojka, her heart beat, beat. Anoka did not dream of what was coming.

After they had had supper, the men began to cross themselves and to wait for the grandfather to get up.

The grandfather put aside his piece of bread, his spoon and fork, and put his knife into its sheath. He leant on his elbows, looked around at everyone and fixed his glance on Anoka.

Something made her start. She let her hands fall by her side, straightened herself and turned to go out.

"Wait, daughter!" cried the grandfather in an unusually clear voice.

All of them started.

In that same voice the grandfather continued—

"You, my child—you. I hear that everything is uncomfortable for you in my house among my people."

Who has ever heard a woman answer? Anoka was silent, but she clutched her thigh with her hand and the nails went into the flesh.

"I will not allow this, while I am alive. I will not allow my house to be a place of forced labour for any one of my children. I hear that these women" (he nodded his head in the direction of the kitchen) —"that these women bully you and treat you badly. But I am master here!"

Anoka saw something crafty in the grandfather's distorted face, and along with her aversion, she felt for the first time a certain uneasiness.

"They have all annoyed you a great deal. They would all like you to work and slave entirely for them, as though you had come here from some destitute house."

He became so awkwardly affectionate and tender that Anoka's hair began to rise on her head.

"I will not allow that! I am old and weak and it is hard for me to keep control by myself among so

many people. But see, I will not allow any more—I——"

His eyes stared, his lips began to tremble. He called out in a harsh and frightening way:—

"All of you! You listen too, Radojka, and you, Blagoje, and all the rest. I order all of you and your wives to obey her there." With his hand, which trembled like a reed, he pointed to Anoka. "I do not wish her to work at anything in my house nor to soil her fine fingers—not even to draw the wine. May God kill him who does not obey her in everything or annoys her in the very least in anything!"

He sprang up. Poor old man! Dignified and at the same time laughable and pathetic. As he went out he shook like a jelly.

They all crossed themselves and got up, keeping silence as they passed Anoka, and turning aside lest they should touch her.

A fearful and horrible rage tore through Anoka. Like a mad thing she flew to the women in the kitchen—

"Have you heard—you?"

Women and not to hear?

"I want my bed made under the lime tree. I want grandfather's mattress, grandmother's pillow, Blagoje's quilt, and I want you, Petrija, you whose brother is in prison, to take a stick and to drive the hens away from the lime tree and to stand over me the

whole night. And she who does not obey—may God kill her! Now then, quickly, do you hear?''

No one spoke a single word. They were as though stunned, and particularly by the grandfather's words: ''May God kill him!''

Arsen fled at once to the threshing floor. He buried his head among the piled up sheaves and breathed heavily. In vain—sleep is not a quilt to be pulled over the head at will.

And the women made preparations for Anoka to sleep.

But it was not so easy to fall asleep as she thought. As never before she now felt loneliness, and with no roof over her head she felt herself a rider of a wild horse without a bridle, a pilotless ship driven by the wind. Her own wild heart was crushing down upon her and there was no one to beat it off.

But her spirit was stubborn. She would not yield. She addressed herself angrily: ''I order you to sleep! Obey, lazy wretch! I order you! Do you wish God to kill you?''

The half moon blazed in the sky. Everything was at once dead and ready at any moment to burst into life again. Something evil was worming its way gradually into Anoka's brain to make its nest there.

Matters could not go on like this. What was she to do? If she returned to her father—what could she

say to him? "The grandfather ordered them to obey me!" No, she could not go to her father.

And the night was drawing steadily on, and at last it too would pass, and day would break, and the sun would shine, and she, poor girl, what had she to look to? To be still more self-willed? How could she be more so? To make peace? How? By humiliating herself?

Her thoughts were interlacing themselves like threads in a web. Her thoughts were being washed clean; they were being rinsed out. Weariness conquers passion and love and hate and hunger and thirst. A whole mountain was weighing down her eyelids and still she could not shut them. The weariness was so unendurable that, come what might, and had she been able to do so, she would have turned the world over with a wave of her hand, put her head under a watermill stone and slept—the sleep even of death.

But the grandfather had not laid his commands upon sleep, neither did sleep fear his curses.

Anoka arose. She saw a shadowy picture of Petrija standing above her. Suddenly something broke within her. Quite without warning and with infinite power some chord of sweetness resounded in her heart.

"Petrija, go and sleep!"

Petrija said nothing. She threw away the stick and turned to go.

"Petrija!"

Petrija was astounded and stood as though dug into the ground.

"Petrija, sister, forgive me?"

The woman's heart melted, trembled, and overflowed.

"Anoka, my soul, God will forgive you."

"Petrija, sister!"

She took her by the hand—sat down beside her, embraced her. Both burst into tears.

How sweet was their sobbing—like that of a baby at the breast.

Everything was silent. Under the naked sky there was no other sound, only the sobbing of the two as they kissed each other. And the moon seemed to lift his eyebrows.

"Petrija, my heart, I am going to die! You will wash me, sister! Put enough basil with me. Bite an apple too and throw it into the coffin. No one now loves me but you."

"Be quiet, foolish one, how should they not love you?"

"No, no, I know."

"How can you know, my darling, when you have never spoken to us until now? I would die sooner than allow anyone to speak unkindly of you."

They sobbed again and embraced each other.

"But grandfather——"

"Grandfather, my soul, is good and old. Only go to him alone like this, and you will see."

"Well, I will go. Good-bye my heart. If I die——"

Petrija put her hand on Anoka's mouth.

Anoka removed the hand, and putting it round her neck, said: "If I die, do not speak evil of me. But now go."

"No, I will not leave you while I am alive!"

"But I pray you, as I pray to God——"

"But where are *you* going?"

"Leave me—I am so happy! Leave me, so God help you and your child also. Leave me. You do not know what it is to me!"

Petrija concealed herself behind the house to see where Anoka would go; but it was still dark and she could not see how Anoka went to the door of the grandfather's room and sat on the threshold.

The grandfather too had not shut his eyes the whole night through.

The first cocks crowed, the first messengers of a new day and of new life. To Anoka their song had never before seemed so beautiful.

The grandfather rose, threw off the quilt, crossed himself, drew his legs under him and remained alone in the darkness sitting on his bed, busy with many thoughts. The second cocks crowed. The grandfather rose and started for the well. On the thres-

hold, but with difficulty through the dim dawn, he caught sight of the form of a human being.

"Who are you?"

"I am Anoka, grandfather. I want to die. Forgive me if you can."

The grandfather was astounded and trembled.

"My child, do not sin before God. Do you see this lock of hair? No sheep has whiter."

Anoka seized the corner of his coat and kissed it.

"I have sinned horribly against you and I have disturbed your house. Forgive me if you can, for God's sake."

Nothing is easier than to make an old man weep. Tears came to his eyes. He took Anoka's head between his hands and kissed her.

"Come here."

She went behind him into the room.

"Sit here."

She sat on the bench, the grandfather on the bed.

"Shell those peas for a little while."

She shelled the peas.

The grandfather watched her contentedly as she shelled them.

Both were silent. Only the heart did its work and day broke.

"Now come here."

She went behind him to the stable and attended to all the horses as he showed her. She showed no

fear even of Blagoje's horse, which was uncertain, both with teeth and hoofs.

"Now come here."

He went in front of her once more, this time to the pigsty. She broke up nine pumpkins and threw them to the pigs.

The household had waked up. They were coming out one by one, following the two timidly and with wide open eyes. But they took care, however, that the grandfather and Anoka should not see them. Arsen was so disconcerted and embarrassed that he climbed into a walnut tree, hid himself among the leaves, and looked on at this never-before-seen wonder.

The grandfather had become younger. He seemed to leap over the ground.

"Come to the well."

They came to the well.

"Draw."

Anoka drew up the bucket.

"Pour it out."

Anoka poured it out from a gourd, and the grandfather poured out the whole bucket over his face and head.

"Now dry me."

Anoka smoothed back his hair and began to dry him. It was easy to wipe away the water, but the old man's eyes were feeble, and his tears fell without ceasing.

The grandfather caught sight of some of the watchers in the courtyard.

"Come here, you! Why are you not washing? See Anoka is waiting to pour out the water."

A kind of childish satisfaction played over his face.

"All, all. She will pour it out for all of you."

The men and women approached the well with timidity, and all, when they had washed, said "thank you" to Anoka, as though they were gentlefolk.

Arsen gathered courage. He drew nearer to the well, spread out his legs, bent forward and held out his hands:—

"Now!"

She began to pour. Arsen was in the ninth heaven.

"Is that how you pour? All up the sleeves!"

"Wait a little, it will come all right." And she pulled up his sleeves with her left hand; with her right she tilted the gourd.

"May you live long!"

Petrija ran from one sister-in-law to the other. All were bathed in tears. They whispered among themselves, waved their arms and beat themselves on the breast.

The grandfather, shaking as he walked, went to his room. He opened a coffer and took out a necklace of some old eagles. He put the necklace and a little towel in his breast and went again to the well.

All had washed and Anoka had poured out for them all.

Everything was wrapped in a kind of mysterious holiness, and "the voice of the Lord on the waters" sang in everyone's ears. If a gun had gone off suddenly, they would have begun crossing themselves.*

The grandfather looked at them all with kindly dignity.

"And is no one pouring out for her?"

All rushed to the bucket.

"Yes, because I suggested it. Now I wish to pour out for her myself. Come, my child, wash yourself."

I do not know whether his hands or Anoka's heart trembled most. He dried her with his towel. He hung the necklace on her neck.

"Poor child! But keep in mind, all of you, what I said to you last night: 'He who troubles her in anything, may God kill him.'"

* The ceremony of great Church festivals in Serbian countries is announced by the sound of guns. The passage refers to the Day of Christ's Baptism, when a very impressive service is performed on the edge of the water. During the songs and the firing the community stands bareheaded.

THE KUM'S CURSE.

By Janko Veselinovich

Janko Veselinovich was born in Sabach, Serbia, and graduated from the Normal School for primary teachers. While a schoolmaster in a village school he devoted himself to reading Serbian books to complete his inadequate education. The example of Lazarovich inspired him most of all and he began to write stories which were very sympathetically received. Very young, full of talent, and popular from the very beginning, he wasted his youth and his health without a thought of the morrow. Then poverty came upon him—he had only a small government post at Belgrade, or a job as editor of some unimportant review—and illness. The struggle to live, and the miseries of political life under the régime of the two last Obrenovichi (the kings Milan and Alexander) finally brought about his death which occurred in 1904. Gifted with a fertile imagination and naturally prolific he wrote half a hundred stories, six novels, two plays and various literary essays.

THE KUM'S CURSE*

By Janko Veselinovich

Villagers, like townspeople, beguile the long winter nights. Some of them either establish themselves round the still which they jokingly call the priest, and there they "make confessions"; or they collect at someone's house and there they drink, sing to the gusla, talk, and tell stories.

I once was in such a little village. There was a large company. We had drunk, sung, and talked to satiety. One of the company begged an old man, Ranko Dragonovich to tell us something. He twisted his moustaches, drank a glass of wine, drew some thick clouds of smoke from his long pipe, and began to tell this story.

I

In the whole of our village there is not an older man than myself. Whichever one of us is here—I know when he was born. I remember much! I remember when our church was not here and when there was an old one there in the graveyard. I remember when Ravnje was invaded, I was eight years old then. I remember when Lord Milosh was chosen prince,

* The "Kum" is the godfather at the christening and also the chief witness at the wedding. In Serbia the kum is an object of particular veneration.

when he was driven out, and when he came again. I remember a great deal. I know when the Turks came over there, when the monks went from village to village and heard confessions and beat the women in order that the women might not deprive them of any cuts of roast meat—and I hated them worse than the Turks.

And today I recollect when the captains began to judge, as they do now, in districts; and when they began to appoint the mayors. Before that there was not a captain; but the village—that is the villagers—proclaimed a man mayor, gave him a staff, and he was mayor after that as long as he was willing to carry on the work honestly. As soon as he began to deal falsely we turned him out and chose another, That is how it was done before, in the old world.

In our village my neighbour Stanojlo Puretich was mayor. He was indeed rich and surrounded with a family—that man! There is nothing of that kind today. He was master, then there were his four brothers, then two of his nephews, then two more and a son unmarried, three marriageable girls, then wives, children; a full house and belongings for half a village. Fields, meadows, pastures and woods. On the fields were stubble or fruitful maize and on the pastures fed a stud of horses and complete herds of oxen, sheep, and pigs.

Stanojlo was a tall man, straight as a candle, stout

and powerful. One had only to glance at those powerful hands of his to bow before him. He must have been about fifty years old, because he was getting grey. He was extraordinarily strong in character. What he said he did not unsay, even though it might mean the loss of his head. He paid attention to no one; but did everything upon his own judgment. In his house no one dared to go against his orders. In the community it was the same, because he would get angry then and beat everything he got hold of. He generally carried a whip in his hand and would beat whoever he could reach when he was angry.

There was no master like him in the world. The people and the children were like him, and all like angels. He just got up in the morning—and he got up early—and called:—

"Milisav!"

The eldest brother came, and he then allotted the work, and each one went off to his task. No one dared to make confusion! Then he washed himself, crossed himself several times, went to the loft, climbed up into it and gathered maize into a sack. Then he sat down and shelled it, then he went out and fed the little pigs (this was his favourite work). When he came back he called the daughter-in-law who was serving him—she was generally the youngest of the wives. She came and poured water for him, and when she had washed his hands she brought his breakfast.

Whether he feasted on dry meat or bacon, or fasted on bean soup—feast or fast—there was always on a little plate a cake white as snow and so supple that it twisted under the knife like a strap. He took his cake, crossed himself, called upon God's name and His Holy Archangels, and bent his head. Afterwards he breakfasted. When he had eaten, his daughter-in-law took away his plate and served him with wine. He took out his long pipe, put out his hand for his tobacco pouch that he had made out of a bladder, and filled his precious pipe. His daughter-in-law brought him a live coal and then he smoked.

When you come to his house you are received like a bishop—God forgive me! Just glance at what is done among those people. Stanojlo generally is silent and smokes; but when he wants anything he has only to cough and the daughters-in-law fly as though they had wings! They seek round with their eyes to see what is wanted—for Stanojlo says nothing.

And you—you have only just to mention what you want, and it is before you that instant.

For instance: You would drink boiled brandy—Just say so—and one is free to ask for things in Stanojlo's house—

"Bring boiled brandy, my child."

And immediately it is before you, as though the woman had been holding it in her lap like an apple. There—that is how Stanojlo was in his own house.

And in the village? In the village he was as fierce as in his house. Formerly there was no court of justice such as there is today; but the court then was under any leafy tree—either in front of the mayor's house or in the middle of the village. It was there generally that the mayor gave judgment between litigants who came to him with disputes. In our village —just by the cross—there was such a tree. There is none there now.

Stanojlo went out to the cross.* The men who had anything to dispute or complain about, came to him, called upon God and greeted him, then they brought their complaint before him. Stanojlo listened to each one attentively and then said: "Let such and such a thing be done in such and such a way." And so it was.

When it was necessary for us to be collected together either for a conference or for a corvée Stanojlo immediately—the day before the assembly—sent an order to the crier, one-eyed Veljko, and he made it known to the people. He had to call upon the desert places and to be heard throughout the village. And then—just don't come, and see what happens!

Perhaps you would defend yourself by saying that you had not heard. Stanojlo would just look at you and then burst out: "Twenty-five strokes. Veljko told him! He says that he did not hear!"

*Crossroads where there is generally erected a great cross.

Beseech, implore, call him your brother, bring down the sky upon the earth, it is no good. What Stanojlo has said must be, even if by reason of his decision he were to go to war with God. Veljko hisses like a serpent and thereafter you scratch yourself well and hear each time when Veljko calls.

When he collected a tax, he marked it all on a tally-stick—and then he knew everyone by name—who had given and how much he had given. And in this also he was violent. He simply said:—

"A week from today I wish the tax to be in my hands."

And then he mounted his white horse, seized that cursed whip, and the man who did not give would be whipped as his nobody. Sometimes this meant the man's being sold up to pay the tax. The older men loved this and praised Stanojlo whenever it happened.

"This is worth while! That is how to be mayor! He will not let a man be a trouble for long. Be like this or like that. Beat him and let him steam. Afterwards there is no escape. What Stanojlo says must be—like bread if you wish to be satisfied. Assuredly other villages have not mayors like that."

The younger generation did not exactly love Stanojlo. He did not please them because he was too self-willed whether he had or had not the right, but they did not dare to go against the will of the elder ones.

And Stanojlo—he was mayor as he had been pro-

claimed. No one could have had any conception that anyone could be found to oppose him, and yet such a man was found.

II

It was his kum Srechko Sokovich.

Small, grey, red-faced, with some front teeth missing; but a brisk-walking little old man was Srechko—or as we called him in the village—Chicha-Srechko.* God rest his soul. He was a happy little old man. He could never have a discussion with a man without turning round like a weather-glass and beating the ground with his stick. When he saw that you were attending and were coming round to his opinion, he simply did not know what to do for joy. It was as much pleasure to him as though he had obtained God knew what.

Chicha-Srechko was of great importance in the village. When it was necessary to increase anyone's barley, they would immediately call Chicha-Srechko and he then, happy because no wise man was willing to do anything without his advice, would come at once and would speak much on every point and advise that such and such a thing should be done.

He would never actually say in words, however,

* "Chicha" literally means an uncle. It is used as a prefix of affection for an old man. "Chicha-Srechko," "Chicha-Jova."

that he enjoyed this;—rather he would be angry, wriggle and throw himself about, and say to each one that he had to leave his work to go there and mix himself up in the affairs of the mayoralty—but in the end he did it for love of the community. We saw, however, how much he enjoyed it, how he thought that with his remonstrance he was concealing his pleasure from us, and we only laughed when he turned his back upon us.

On one occasion, I do not know why, he had a disagreement with his godson, Mayor Stanojlo. Stanojlo advised something and Chicha-Srechko did not approve; but began to prove that Stanojlo's advice was not at all sound. Stanojlo—accustomed to having his advice accepted—could hardly bear this in front of people; and from that moment he hated his kum Srechko and was on the lookout for a suitable opportunity for gratifying his desire to pay him back for his affront.

Chicha-Srechko, again, began gradually to insinuate against Stanojlo—calling him "the self-willed." Wherever people were gathered together talk about Stanojlo began immediately. The younger generation was exceedingly anxious that there should be a discussion with Chicha-Srechko.

Stanojlo heard of this. He went almost mad when they told him of it.

'Why should he alone defy me? Why are the

others silent and he alone curses me? He shall pay me for that at once."

So Stanojlo thought, and hardly had he taken this decision when he held back, thinking:

"What shall I do to him. The man is old; and also—also he is my kum. Who would dare to do this?"

Day after day he delayed. The men went on with their business. It seemed that Chicha-Srechko was pacified; but again little by little there grew up a murmur against Stanojlo, and Stanojlo again waited for an opportunity to pay his kum Srechko for all this—and that opportunity was given him.

It was exactly on Ognjenja Marija (17th July). It was a general custom for the men not to work on that day; but to collect beside the cross and to talk there. Both Stanojlo and Srechko were there with other honest householders. They sit down and talk.

"Who is that?" said Chicha-Jova.

"Mirko," said Chicha-Srechko putting his hand over his eyes.

"Which Mirko? Is it Stojich?"

"Yes, he."

"What is he hurrying like that for?"

"I do not know, God be with me!" said Chicha-Srechko.

And at that instant Mirko was among them.

"God help you!"

"God hear you!"

"What are you doing?"

"Why we are sitting."

"Why are you so covered with sweat?" Chicha-Srechko asked him.

"Well, I was looking for you."

"Me?"

"Yes. Those boys of yours who look after the hedges have let the oxen into my maize and it is all broken down."

"It cannot be!"

"Come and see."

"But how could it be allowed?"

"How indeed. I told you that your palings up to my meadow had been overturned and that you would have to put them up. You know—thanks to God—that that black ox of yours is a thief."

"Yes, yes, and I told the children to look after him, and now they have let him go. There is much damage, you say?"

"Very much, indeed."

Stanojlo's eyes flashed.

"Veljko!" he called.

One-eyed Veljko came up.

"Have you given notice that the people should guard their own stock so that their beasts should not go out and do damage?"

"Yes, truly," said Veljko.

"Did you say that I would punish anyone who should let his stock go to someone else's feed?"

"I did."

"Well—Kum Srechko?" said Stanojlo—hardly concealing his joy at having Srechko so completely under his feet.

"I, godson, I also told my people and, you see, they have let them out."

"And what kind of a head of a family are you if your young people do not obey you?"

"They obey me, godson, but you see, children, they played. See. I will pay what damage there is. I will not repudiate it."

"I know you will pay! You will have to pay. But why should it have happened?"

"But it will not any more."

"You will not dare to let it happen any more! Now—did you hear what Veljko gave out—that everyone who let his beasts do damage would be punished?"

"I heard it."

"And you did not pay attention, eh?"

"But the children—"

"Veljko. Prepare!"

"What, godson. What?" cried Chicha-Srechko, springing up as though he had been scalded.

"What? Five and twenty, that is what!"

Stanojlo was dreadful. His great eyebrows came

down over his eyes, and his eyes shone like two stars. Chicha-Srechko looked at him—looked—and his shirt hardly trembled.

"Five and twenty for whom?"

"For you." Stanojlo hardly answered.

"For me!"

"For you!"

"For this grey hair?" said Chicha-Srechko taking off his cap and holding up a mass of grey hair.

"Yes!"

"For the kum who held you in his arms?"

"For my kum and for my father and for God, and for everyone who does not obey me. Down!"

"I will pay," said Chicha-Srechko.

"Down!" said Stanojlo.

"Down?"

"Down!"

"I will not."

His small eyes blazed and he drew his sword. He looked around him and cried;

"Whoever comes to me is a dead man. Godson Stanojlo, see, I will pay you a ducat for every blow. You see this grey hair. Look! I have become white and have never yet received one blow, and you—you wish to strike me five and twenty times!"

"Yes, I do wish it. Veljko hold him!"

Veljko ran up, struck Chicha-Srechko's hand with

his staff—and the knife fell down. Veljko bound him by the arms. Men sprang forward.

"What do you want, Stanojlo?" cried Chicha-Jova.

Stanojlo seized his staff, sprang upon Jova and cried out:—

"Back! All of you! Veljko, take him to the whipping bench."

The throng drew back. No one dared so much as to look at Stanojlo, or make it his duty to prevent him from doing what he intended! Everything was silenced. It seemed as though you could hear hearts beating. Stanojlo simply shook with joy.

"Not upon your kum and Saint John!" cried Chicha-Srechko when they had brought him to that ill-omened plank known as the whipping bench.

"No, not upon my kum," said Stanojlo in a quasi-peaceful voice, and he took off his cap and put it upon the ground far from himself.

"See. There is our kumship in the cap."

"Godson, let me pay."

"You are going to pay now."

The people turned their heads and looked into the copse. Veljko took Chicha-Srechko who besought him up to the last moment, and threw him down onto the bench. Then, with special chains, he bound his body to the plank by the arms, legs, and shoulders. He drew back to choose a rod. Chicha-Srechko again

pleaded; but Stanojlo lifted his eyebrows, and only said every now and then;

"See—The kumship is in the cap."

III

One-eyed Veljko threw the broken rod away and unbound the old man from the whipping bench. Chicha-Srechko was silent—lying as though there were no life in him. Veljko pushed him from the plank to the ground. The old man sprang up—with blood-shot, weeping eyes; he looked at the assembled people, cast a glance at Stanojlo who avoided his eyes, and at Veljko who stood beside Stanojlo quietly scratching his head, then he cast his eyes down. He was silent for some moments, with his head bent down in that way; his breast heaved with his breathing, and he let his hands fall by his side. All of a sudden tears came to him, and he began to weep. He put both hands before his eyes, came up to the cross and bowed before it. Then he raised his head, looked over the assembled people and spat out;

"Shame upon you. Why did you allow such a thing to happen before your eyes? Truly—you are not men!"

He tore the cap from his head, crossed himself, kissed the cross and cried:—

"Almighty God! Hear the voice of thy serf and listen to his prayer."

Then he looked at Stanojlo. Stanojlo trembled.

"God grant, godson, that sorrow await you for your life. May your happiness be turned to mourning. May your seed be blotted out. And you, hero, may you not die until you are given up to me to fall before me on your knees to seek pardon. You say our kumship is in the cap—and see, you have denied it, and I deny it too. Now we are no longer kums."

Having said this he cast the cap which he held in his hands under his feet and trampled upon it. Then he passed through the people and went on his way to his house. A breeze played among his hair—white as snow—and the people followed him with their eyes shaking with horror.

IV

A dead silence prevailed for some moments. No one uttered a single word. The people just eyed each other as though they were talking with their eyes. Suddenly there began a noise which grew steadily greater and greater. The voice of Chicha-Jova could already be distinguished:—

"Men, Brothers, can this be?"

"Misfortune!" cried some.

"Scandal!" cried others.

"Shame!" cried a third group.

"How could he—in that way."

"And God did not see fit to kill him!"

"Nor thunder to consume him!"

"To beat an old man like that!"

"And the kum who had held him in his arms!"

"If he does not pay respect to his kum God will not pay it to him!"

"And is he our mayor?" said Chicha-Jova.

"He must be deposed," groaned the people. "Give his staff here!"

"Give it to Chicha-Jova!" cried the old men.

Stanojlo was standing as though petrified. He did not hear the shouts of the people; but was looking with a long glance after Chicha-Srechko. He did not move his eyelids at all and his eyes were dull and glazed like those of a corpse.

"Stanojlo!"

"Well?"

"The people do not wish for you any longer as mayor. Will you give your staff here?"

He looked at Chicha-Jova in such a way that Jova drew back several paces.

"The people do not wish you as mayor!" said Chicha-Jova almost choking.

"They do not wish me?"

"They do not wish you. We do not want you! Give

your staff here. You are no longer mayor!" shouted the people.

Stanojlo was silent. Then Ivko Chulobrk went out from the people—a stout and powerful giant. He seized the staff from Stanojlo's hand and cried:—

"People—Brothers! Here is the staff. To whom do you say we shall give it?"

"To Jova. Chicha-Jova," cried the people.

Ivko held out the staff to Jovan. Jovan took it. Stanojlo was silent with hands drooping beside him.

"You make me mayor, Brothers?" asked Chicha-Jova.

"Yes Jova. Yes Chicha-Jova."

"But, Brothers, I am a fierce man."

"But you are not heartless."

"No. That I am not."

"You pay attention both to God and to your soul."

"Well, you know me."

"Yes, we know you."

"But, Brothers, I seek to be obeyed."

"We will obey."

"And I shall work again with a conference."

"So. So."

And so they changed the mayor in a moment.

One-eyed Veljko immediately went up to Chicha-Jova.

"What do you want?" Jova asked him.

"But you are mayor!"

"And Stanojlo?"

"He is not any more."

"But how can you be crier under me? Would you give Stanojlo five and twenty?"

"If you were to order me!" said Veljko.

Stanojlo simply was silent. It was as though he had not heard what was said there, as though this whole discussion did not concern him at all. Bowed at the cross, with limp hands and wrinkled forehead, he meditated upon all that this short moment had brought forth. It seemed as if his crime had bitten into him. Thick sweat flowed from his face and not once did he move his hand or his sleeve to wipe it off. Surely things had not come to such a pass for him. Finally he cast a glance around him. All standing round looked at him with black glances. He understood the position in which he found himself. Surrounded by such a throng he was alone, quite alone. There was not one heart for him there, and that this was hard for him could be seen from his laboured breathing. Powerless to command because they would not obey him. Powerless to reconcile them because he himself had not been merciful. Having no power to bear these glances full of hate as well as the grief in his heart, he was compelled to move away.

He moved away from the cross. The earth seemed to give way under his feet, he began to stumble. Those same people who a short moment before had trembled

before his shadow now looked confidently at him. Already the one-eyed had denounced him, and twos and threes had coughed ironically.

Stumbling he came to the crossroads and stopped. He would have stayed there; but something within himself impelled him to go further. He did not look where he was going—only to go—to flee from this throng, from these people.

He passed along the whole street. Two or three dogs barked at him several times. He went out into the fields and rushed like the wind among the piled-up sheaves and stooks—not going by the path but through the straw.

"What have I done, great sinner that I am! Cursed be my brain. Cursed be my nature, and my morning's morning, and my day's day. What can happen to me—to have beaten my kum who christened me? The kum is greater than the father. He cursed me. What was that he said? 'May your rejoicing be turned to mourning. May your seed be blotted out!'

"And a kum can curse. God accepts his curse sooner than that of a father or of a mother. What a kum has cursed can never prosper. And I have an only son. I have my Radoje who is as the pupil of my eye! He is my happiness and my joy and my fortune—everything. 'May your seed be blotted out!' "

He trembled. Something cold passed over his

whole body from head to foot. His knees gave way and he fell like a stone.

"Oh God my Saviour, I beseech Thee, Preserve, Lord, my only son, my only joy, my house, my fortune, my Radoje! Kill me, me. I am guilty. Oh earth, why do you not open. Strike me with thunder, Lord, strike the ill-omened one who has raised his hand against his kum. But my Radoje, my child—. He is still young, green. I beseech you—he—he is—he must still. I implore Thee, Father of Heaven, preserve—!"

There weeping suffocated him. He fell on his knees on the ground and buried his head in his hands. A river of tears rushed to his eyes. These were his first tears since his childhood.

Blessed is the man whose eyes can weep tears. What plaster is to a wound tears are to a sick heart. They carry pain away as wind carries chaff.

He rose. He was rather more quiet; but horror seized him again. He rolled in his walk, thinking:—

"What shall I do? I must make my peace with my kum, but how? Who will broach the subject to him? I—I cannot. How shall I come before his eyes? How dare I look at him? Shall I ask the people to make peace between us? No one will! The whole world hates me and God hates me. And I myself hate myself. But I must carry it through before the curse falls upon me. But see, there is no one who could

help me! And I myself, if I were to set about it could not finish anything. I am not afraid for myself, if death were to come upon me it would be very welcome. But Radoje—if it were to come upon him!''

Once more despair seized him. He longed to turn his back by force upon these thoughts. He began to think of something else; but came back to his former thoughts. The thought:—''May your rejoicing be turned to sorrow. May your seed be blotted out.'' could not be driven out of his head.

The sun had set when he returned to the village. An evening breeze was cooling the fever of the day, the women were standing talking at their doors, children were playing in the road—collecting the dust into little piles.

The affair had already been heard of throughout the whole village and whoever had a mouth was talking of Stanojlo and Chicha-Srechko—in particular the women—for until they had sifted out the whole matter, they could do nothing.

''Have you heard what happened by the cross today to our poor friend Srechko?'' one was saying.

''Yes, indeed. I heard it at the very moment!''

''May thunder burn him! How could he dare to do it, and actually to his kum!''

''And why did you expect better of him? He is a fiend. I said so to my husband before—when they made him mayor.''

"They say that he cursed him."

"He cursed him, yes, what do you expect! It would not help him, thank Heaven, even if he were to go into a monastery and if a hundred monks were to read to him!"

"They say, also, that he violated the kumship—that he denied it!"

"And what do you expect! Why should he not deny his enemy?"

"Quiet, silly one. Here he is!"

Stanojlo walked with bent head, stooping. He went straight by the path.

"Run away, there is the mayor!" said a child.

The children turned round. One—the eldest of them, said:—

"The mayor? He is not the mayor now. My father says he is nothing."

Saying nothing to them, he passed through them and went to his house.

V

If thunder had struck the household of Stanojlo Puretich it would not have aroused such consternation as that aroused by the news that Stanojlo had beaten Chicha-Srechko. The men wandered hither and thither and uttered only a hollow sound. The women collected their children round them as brood-

ing hens do their chickens and then caressed and kissed them. Each one looked at her own children with tearful eyes for they knew that it was upon the children that the curse would fall first of all. The brothers of Stanojlo were discussing how the one way of salvation from the curse was to split up the household.

"And we will not, truly, eat any more from the same dish with him, even if he were to die," said Milisav.

"Better to die, brothers, than to see the young ones dying," said Petar.

"I told him not to accept that cursed mayoralty; but he railed at me then and told me to mind my own business," said Kuzman.

"What he has done, let him suffer for himself also," said Djuradj.

"Well—have we decided to split up?" asked Milisav.

"We have decided."

"Who is willing to tell him so?" asked Petar.

"I," said Milisav.

"Why did he bring this upon himself and upon us!" said Kuzman.

"I said from the very first that he was not the man for mayor," said Milisav.

"You said so, and what happened to you? The same as to me," said Kuzman.

"Why isn't he here?" asked Petar.

"I don't know."

"Did he stay by the cross?"

"No. They say that he went out to the woods."

"And he is no longer mayor?"

"No. It is Chicha-Jova now."

"It is dark already. Why is he not here?"

At that moment the gate clicked. They looked up. Stanojlo came in stooping. He passed through them with no greeting and went into the house. All were silent as though cast in a mould. They waited for him to come out; but he did not come.

No one slept that night. The women only sighed and the men were silent, smoking their pipes. The night passed, day had almost dawned. Milisav expected that Stanojlo would call him as usual, and give him orders about the work. He waited, waited, but the summons did not come. Finally he went himself into Stanojlo's room. Stanojlo was sitting on a bench, he had buried his head in his hands, and was silent. His wife Stepanija was standing beside the stove. He did not raise his head when Milisav opened the door. Milisav coughed. Still he did not raise his head.

"Stanojlo!" Milisav called to him.

"Well?" he said, raising his head.

Milisav looked at him. His eyes were bloodshot, his face somewhat more lined, and his hair whiter.

"Come here."

"What shall I do for you?"

"We have something to discuss with you."

"But what?" said Stanojlo transfixing him with his glance.

It was as though someone had caught Milisav by the throat—his voice was so constrained.

"Let me call the others too."

"Call them, then," said Stanojlo.

Milisav went out. Very soon all four came in. Stanojlo rose and told Stepanija to go outside. When they were left alone he asked them in a harsh voice:—

"What do you want?"

"We want to split up!" said Milisav.

"To split off from me?"

"Yes. That we should split off," cried all three.

"I want to say something to you myself."

"What?" they asked.

"That you should go to my kum."

"He is no longer your kum. People say that he renounced the kumship. Is that true?"

"Yes—but—he—beseech him—"

"And you?"

"I dare not."

"Then why should we?"

"Go—beg him. He will forgive you."

"What do you say, Milisav?"

"I dare not."

"Nor dare we!" said the three. "It would be better to cut ourselves off from you."

"But, I implore you."

"We dare not!"

"We want a division of property," said Djuradj.

"You may have everything!"

"No. Only our shares."

"I need nothing."

"You may not need it; but what about Radoje?" said Kuzman.

Stanojlo bowed his head. Then he said:—

"Leave him whatever you will!"

"We must think it out well."

"Yes, that is right. Go and discuss it. Here is Radoje."

Stepanija flew into the room as though maddened, shrieking.

"What is it?" they asked her.

"Kum Srechko is dead!"

If a bomb had fallen amongst them they would have been equally overwhelmed. Stanojlo was the first to come to himself.

"Dead? But when?" he asked.

"At dawn," was the answer.

Nothing more was even mentioned of the further preservation of the household. This house was under a curse and they must leave it. The property was quickly divided—no one wished to have the house.

Stanojlo was left alone with Stepanija and Radoje.

VI.

Stepanija had been ill before, and the news of Chicha-Srechko's death struck her down to her bed. She became fearfully ill. Everyone who saw her said she would never leave her bed. Stanojlo was quite struck dumb. The world paid no attention to him, every living person fled from him, and he himself never went among people. From the time when Stepanija fell ill, one of the daughters-in-law in turn came from Milisav's house to keep things in order.

Stepanija grew worse and worse. One evening she closed her eyes forever.

That event to a certain extent reconciled the neighbours to Stanojlo. Amongst us, as you know, there is a custom of inviting guests both on occasions of rejoicing and of mourning, so the neighbours came to accompanying Stepanija to her last home.

The very appearance of Stanojlo astonished them. It was as though he felt that the fulfilment of the kum's curse was beginning. He was convinced that in the course of the year yet another would leave the house for the grave, because the eyes of the dead body were open, and that was a sign that someone else would die. His heart was, as it were, a boiler at the boil. An internal fire consumed him, and what

boils inside a man is always visible on his face.

Seeing what condition Stanojlo was in, the neighbours began to pity him, and, the world is the world. It easily forgets today what happened yesterday. What it praised yesterday it will condemn today, and what it blamed yesterday it will praise today. As it is said:— "Another day, another custom."

"Why, man, I could never have imagined that a man could change so!" said one.

"And I, brother. But you never know," said a second.

"I know now. Why here is Stanojlo."

"And he has got thin," said a third.

"And pale," added the first.

"Then, you see, men, that he was not exactly a bad man," said the second.

"Only fierce."

"That is what he is paying for now."

"But, it seems to me that the dead Stepanija's eyes were open."

"Not really?"

"Yes, truly."

"Then another from the house."

"That will be Stanojlo. See how he is already smelling of the funeral cake."

Old Chicha-Chira shook his head in sign of disagreement.

"What is it, Chicha?"

"I am afraid for the child."

"But the child is as healthy as a dogberry tree."

"There is the curse, my sons. The dead Srechko said—it seems to me—'May your seed be blotted out!' "

"Yes."

"Well!" said Chicha-Chira, once more shaking his head.

"Here is Stanojlo."

He came among them and asked them whether they had brandy in their flasks.

They buried Stepanija. Stanojlo gave her everything in order, the funeral feast, the feast on the third day, the feast on the fortieth, the feast at the half year, and the feast at the year. When it was all finished he gave his mind to marrying Radoje. And it was indeed time. The house had been without women for a year, and a house without women—we know what that is!

And that Radoje of his was a fine young man, in the perfection of health and strength. The down on his upper lip was getting black and when a little began to appear on his chin, the falcon shaved it. A good dancer, a good flute player, a good singer, a happy temperament, you could get what you wished from him. The girls forgot the curse that was on him when they saw him.

When he looked at Radoje, Stanojlo began to forget

his troubles. He began to go among people again; he even was reconciled with the sons of Srechko.

Stanojlo began to give his attention to girls, and he found one in Selici. The girl was exactly suitable to the man, and in form they were as alike as box trees.

Stanojlo had already invited his wedding guests. There was a flask decorated with a chain of old Austrian coins. He invited also Jovan, the son of Chicha-Srechko, to be kum; but he said that his father on his deathbed had made him swear that he would not be kum. He promised, however, to come as a wedding guest.

Stanojlo made Chicha-Jova the mayor, kum. The heart of Stanojlo rejoiced. The feet of the old man became younger. He made preparations, bought furniture and ran—which did not seem like him.

"O God, thanks be to Thee! Give me still enough life to see and to know that the smoke is twisting from his chimney, that there will be someone to celebrate my burial. And then, then let me die, for I shall have no more joy to wait for!"

So Stanojlo prayed to God; but, in the midst of that prayer, there darted through his head like a red hot rod, the kum's curse, and the old man trembled, his nerves died, and he only repeated without any kind of conviction, almost unconsciously, the words:—

"God is good, He will hear my prayer!"

His first idea again prevailed and as though in op-

position to it, he repeated the bitter words. He wished by so doing to beat out from his head the idea that was assailing him.

VII.

The actual day came. Stanojlo rose early, and happy and yet sorrowful, wandered through the court. It was one of those beautiful autumn days. The wedding guests were beginning to assemble. The kum came, the chief wedding guest came, the dever (Radoje's best friend—son of a certain Krsman Petrovich, who's name was Sima) and the other gaily-dressed wedding guests. The chief wedding guest led in the musicians. There was a violin, cymbals, a tambourine and a great drum; but there was no sound. The chief wedding guest came to Stanojlo after the wedding guests had dined and said:—

"Let us start."

"Go ahead. Where are you going, Radoje?"

"I am going to fetch pistols for my pobratim."

"Very well, go."

They turned away. There was singing, rejoicing. You should have seen those forty horsemen—all picked men!

Pistols fired, the wedding guests sang, everything resounded, Stanojlo wept for joy. Then, brushing away his tears with his broad sleeve, he said:—

"What is the matter with me, that I begin to weep?"

"Why," said the kum. "It is for joy."

"Yes, it is for joy."

"May you not know tears of a different kind!"

"God grant that!"

At that moment there flashed through his head again the kum's curse, and as though to strangle that idea, he sang:—

"The mother sent Mara under the mountains,
The mother sent her; but Mara did not wish it!
While I am alive, mother, I will not go under
the mountains,
Under the mountains the Turks often go."

"What can that be, kum?" said Chicha-Jova.

The riders had sprung down from their horses. They rushed to the spot—and there was something to see! Radoje lay dead. In his hand was a pistol.

"How did it happen? What is this?"

The affair became clear immediately.

Radoje had told his pobratim Sima to fire the pistol because they were near the girl's house. He obeyed, but the pistol missed fire. Radoje told him that the pistol had already been loaded; but that he must pack up the powder beside the flint. He did so; packed it, pulled the trigger, it ignited, and only the gunpowder flared up to the flint. Radoje took the

pistol to see whether it was loaded and just as he put the barrel to his mouth, the pistol fired, and he fell dead. The pistol had been filled already, but it was not clean, and the fire kept first of all in the touch hole, and afterwards the gunpowder caught—as was the custom with flintlocks.

Great and small wept. Stanojlo alone had no tears. He stood like a rock—dumb. He put his hands under his belt and looked at his only son as he lay with shattered head, all bathed in blood. Who knows what thoughts turned in his brain! That only he can know who has suffered as Stanojlo had, and, be it said, I would not wish that for anyone.

Stanojlo suddenly turned, drew a second pistol from the belt of the dever, cocked it, put it against his forehead and before they could seize him, fired it. It scattered his brain over those who stood round, and instead of one—there now lie two corpses—father and son.

The wedding guests, with open eyes, watched the whole of this scene and when it was over, Chicha-Jova spoke.

"In vain, my children. What must be, must be—and a kum can curse like a mother when she withdraws her breast."

There. That is "The Kum's Curse."

POVARETA

A TALE FROM A DALMATIAN ISLAND

By Simo Matavulya

Simo Matavulya was born in 1852 at Sebenico, Dalmatia. He was a school teacher in the Dalmatian villages and in Montenegro he became an instructor in the Lycée. When he came to Belgrade in 1857 he was an instructor there also and later on a journalist. He was a member of the Serbian Royal Academy.

Matavulya wrote thirty or forty stories, two novels, two plays, some books of travel and his memoirs. He also translated the comedies of Molière and some of the tales of De Maupassant. He died in 1908.

POVARETA

By Simo Matavulya

Between the town and the island, the calm sea was as smooth as glass in the reflection of the hot sun, which was already sinking in the west. A boat was approaching the island, with two men in it, one rowing, the other sitting at the rudder. And although it was early in April, the sun was burning right in their eyes, and they turned their heads towards the hills, of which the more distant were still capped with snow. The boat was heavy; the rower, a man of middle age, looked more like a porter than a boatman, while the man at the rudder was young, tanned and stalwart, dressed in naval uniform. As they were drawing away from the town, the old man plied him with questions, asking who he was, where he came from, whom did he know, how long had he been in the service, but receiving no answer, at length relapsed into silence. For the young islander, Yuray Lukeshich from Krapan, was, like his fellow-islanders, taciturn, and disinclined to be conversational. He simply sat quietly and smoked, looking at the great world around him, the sea and the sky.

Little by little the outlines of the island became discernible. First they distinguished a wood, and a high bell-tower; that is at one end of the island, while the

village is at the other. An age-old pine-forest with a monastery distinguish the island of Krapan from all the others.

The ruddy glow behind Krapan suddenly became more brilliant; the gulls began to dip into the surface of the water more frequently, and shoals of dolphins to shoot past the boat. That roused the young man from his reverie.

"In God's name!" he muttered, and took the starboard oar from the old man.

Soon the boat's keel grated on the sands of the landing-place and at the same moment the bells of the monastery began to boom out their evening call to service. Yuray sprang ashore and stood for a moment bareheaded, in prayer. And the old man, before pushing off again, raised his cap in respect to the "Lord of Angels."

With quick steps the sailor walked to the street which might be called the main one, as there are two others, but they are side streets and much shorter. The houses are of stone, dark with age, in one or more colours, with medium-sized windows and green shutters. Scarcely one was without a little courtyard for the donkeys and the store of dried old vine-stumps, dug up for firewood. If the young man had been a stranger who had chanced to come to the little island, he would certainly have been startled to find the village deserted, with not a living soul in sight, nor the

sound of a human voice, as though a plague had carried off all the inhabitants, and the smoke was rising from deserted hearths. But Yuray never noticed this, for he knew that almost all his folk were in their gardens, which are across the water in the villages of Razhina and Yadrtovats.

His home was at the end of the main street. He came to the back and walked quietly round, when he found a little girl of seven or eight standing on a high pile of vine-boughs over by the wall of the yard. When he came towards her, just as though he had fallen from heaven, the child wanted to scream, but the sailor whispered, "Yoyi!" and put his finger to his lips, and opened his arms, saying:

"Come, jump now, one! two! three!"

The little girl jumped into his arms. Interrupting her kisses, Yuray asked her:

"What were you doing on the wood-pile? And where is Mummy?"

"Mummy is in the kitchen," answered Yoyi, holding his hand and dancing for joy. "And so you have come home! I jumped down for Mish said I would not dare."

Yuray took her into the yard, saying:

"You should not jump from so high, that is not good for little girls. And Mish is a young rascal to dare you. Come along now, quietly, and let's give Mummy a surprise."

"Let us jump at her," whispered Yoyi.

Yuray stood at the door behind the grond floor room, which occupied the whole length of the house. The two windows opposite were wide open and that gave light enough. His eyes took in everything; all was in its own place, just as he had left it, almost the same as his ancestors had left it; the shelves with the pots and pans, two big walnut chests, and a long oak table, with a large crucifix above it, a bench and some three-legged chairs. His glance rested on the outline of a woman who, near the hearth, had turned her face towards the fire. Yuray gave a little cough, the woman turned round, stood still a moment, and they met between the windows.

They exclaimed at once:

"In God's Name, Yuray!"

"Mother! Darling mother!"

After a first embrace, they gazed into each other's eyes, those small, clear, blue eyes which each generation in our islands hands down faithfully to the next, just as they transmit the short head and rounded face, joy of life, sturdy faith, lack of imagination and restricted vocabulary. Yuray's mother, Lutsa, looked more like his elder sister, hardly ten years older, certainly not more. They both had the slightly blunt nose, short rounded chin, rosy and white cheeks; in fact, almost the only difference between them lay in

the earrings, which the mother wore in both ears, but the lad only in the right one.

Then they began a whole series of questions and answers, all beginning with "Why," as the islanders do when they are moved.

"Why, how are you, mother?"

"Why, I am well enough, Yuray, and how are you?"

"Why, I am fit and well; and how is dad?"

"Why, dad is quite well too."

"Why, how is Mish?"

"Why, Mish is well too, and quite grown up."

The mother was silent a moment. and took the biggest three-legged chair, which for centuries had been the special one of the head of the family, and dragged it near the fire. The lad sat down, and began to roll a cigarette. His mother began to scrape some fish in a bowl.

Lutsa stooped low over her work and when she spoke again, her voice was shaky, as though very tired.

"But you wrote that you would not come for another ten days."

"Yes. I took you in . . . to give you a little surprise."

"And have you been right round the world?"

"Not quite round, but a very long way, right away to Omerika."

"And have you seen all sorts of countries?"

"All sorts."

"And black men?"

"Yes, and yellow too . . . And has the harvest been a good one?"

"No, hail spoilt the grapes and we had only thirty barrels of wine and six of oil."

After another pause, Yuray said:

"Why, what news is there?"

As his mother did not reply at once, he added:

"And what news of Maritsa? Well, mother?"

"Not good news, my son," muttered his mother in reply.

Yuray sprang up and cried:

"Lord of Angels! What is it?"

"It is not good news, no—no—," repeated the woman, shaking her head, with a deep sigh.

"By Christ's Passion! mother, what is the matter? Why do not you speak. Is she ill?"

"She has been . . . "

"What—dead—?"

"Yes . . . "

Yuray sank upon his chair. Livid, he stared aghast at his mother for a moment, and could scarcely utter:

"Is it really true?"

"Yes," affirmed his mother, wiping a tear from her eyes. For a long time the lad sat and sobbed, exclaiming:

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!"

At length he asked:

"By Jesus' Wounds! What was the matter?"

"A tumour formed under the right arm. Old Matiya took her to the town to the doctor, but he at once said, 'It is not well': then Matiya took her to the wise women, old Grmina, and she said, 'It is not well': then Matiya performed a vow and walked barefoot to the Lord of Angels. But nothing availed. It is now eight days since her sweet young body lies rotting in the blessed earth."

"Her—Oh, mother! Have you been to the poor girl's grave?"

"God help thee my poor boy! Except myself, no one knows that you had chosen her; nor did she herself, poor child, know."

"Povareta! Povareta!" cried Yuray, burying his face in his hands. "My poor little girl! And she never knew that I had vowed my soul to her, that I was ever thinking of her, on the sea, in Omerika, and even when on duty. Look, yesterday in the town I bought a ring for her."

He stood up and out of his breeches he took a box with a golden ring, which he handed to his mother. And again he sat down and wept.

"Mother, mother, I will die too."

"God help thee, crazy child!" cried Lutsa, putting the ring into the deep pocket of her skirt. "Are you a Christian or have you turned Jew? Are you going to work against God's will? Come, here come our men.

It would be a shame if you did not go to meet them. And it would be a greater shame if men knew why you are mourning, for you never claimed her hand, nor is it known that you intended to when you came home. Say your prayers for her soul, and go to meet the boats."

She brought a basin of water, and he washed his hands and bathed his eyes, and rather abashed, and taking his little sister, went out by the same way he had come.

The little landing-place was already full of craft and resounded with men's cries and donkey's braying, for every "*gayeta" of Krapan* (that is a boat of over a ton, with the bows decked over), carried a donkey laden with firewood. It was Saturday, so the men were returning rather later.

His heart froze when among the first he saw Matiya weāring a black cap, and his two daughters with black veils. He felt it keenly when one of them recognised him and called out:

"See, that sailor, why, it is Aunt Lutsa's Yuray!"

That was Pava Tanfara, Maritsa's sister, and very like her.

As all were busy collecting their tools and getting their donkeys ashore, hardly anybody noticed him, but he quickly scanned them all, the Grms, Lukeschiches, Yarans, Tanfaras, Prebundas, Yugars, with all their families and young men, and then he felt he must cry

out: "And where are you, Loveliest Flower of Krapan, Maritsa Tanfara? Where are you, coming from your garden, that I may hear your little silver voice, and gaze upon your slender figure, that white face and those dear black eyes?"

Marko Lukeshich had made his boat fast when his son came up to him from behind. The "old man," lean and tough, about forty-five years old, was dragging his donkey Rizhan by the halter, while Mish was pushing his hind quarters. It was vain for Yoyi to keep calling out: "Yuray has come home! Here he is!"; neither of them turned their head until Rizhan had jumped ashore with his load. Then Mish, a lively lad of sixteen, embraced his brother and refused to be separated from him. But Marko simply shook hands with Yuray, holding out a grimy fist, saying:

"Hullo! A little surprise, eh? And how are you?"

"I am well enough, dad," answered Yuray, shaking his father's hand, "how Mish has grown!"

"Like a weed," said the man, and he held a burning match to Yuray's face before lighting his pipe. After a puff or two, he put his hand on Yuray's shoulder and said:

"Well, what is all the trouble about?"

"Why, dad?"

"Because your face is white and pale, and your eyes all red. Why, young Yurega, who came home from

the navy six weeks ago, told us that you were as red as a rose."

"I have not been quite myself since yesterday."

The villagers began to pass them, and even in the dark his uniform attracted attention. Voices could be heard saying: "Is that young Yuray?" "Why, yes, it is Yuray," and "Hullo, Yuray, how are you?"

As a matter of fact, Marko never hurried, even old Rizhan the donkey knew this, and when the crowd had passed by, he went on alone. Yoyi and Mish took their brother by the arm, while the father, crunching the gravel as he walked, began to tell his son all about the past summer, about their work, what they had spent, and all the little details of their daily life, which had occurred during the five and twenty months of the lad's absence.

Lutsa was waiting for them in front of the house. On the bench there was a big earthen basin of water and towels. The children took Rizhan to unload him and bed him down, but Marko quickly stripped off his jacket, waistcoat and shirt, bent his swarthy frame over the basin, shewing all his ribs and spine. He washed his hands first, and then his face with clean water, and then with fresh water again his neck. When his wife had scrubbed and dried his back, he ran indoors and put on clean clothes. Mish did the same, only Yoyi rubbed his shoulders.

On the supper table there were a bowl of greens, a

dish of fried fish, crumbs of barley bread, and a jug of "*bevanda*" or wine mixed with water.

Lutsa took from the foot of the crucifix two chaplets, giving one to her husband. All five of them turned to the sacred emblem, while the father said aloud: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen"; then they all repeated together the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the other prayers that make the rosary. This lasted about a quarter of an hour.

Supper lasted about twice as long. Nobody spoke. Lutsa nudged Yuray, who tried hard to swallow a few mouthfuls; Marko solemnly chewed each mouthful, resting his tired head on his palm. Only when they first poured out the wine, he looked quickly at Yuray, then at his wife, then took a drink, and finally said:

"Why, in God's Name, what a fine fellow this boy of ours is! What a grand young gentleman! Just wait a bit until we put a hoe in his hand."

All drank from the same jug, and then at a sign from the mother, the young folk went upstairs to bed. Lutsa brought a smaller jug and a glass, and when she poured it out it was obviously pure wine, black and thick. Marko drank to his son, "Welcome home!" and emptied his glass; Lutsa herself then drank half a glass to his welcome home, and stood the jug and glass before her son. At the same time his father put a pipe in front of him, filled it, and said:

"You spent the night in Zadar on the spree, I can see that; and to-day you had a good drink in town; anybody can see that, eh?"

"Why?" asked the lad, forcing a smile.

"And what the devil did you see in Omerika?"

"How do I know, dad? An order comes, and then it is forward! In front of us was a cruiser, the Maria Theresa, bound for Australia, a full six months' trip."

"And he has seen black and yellow men," added his mother, drumming on the table with her fingers.

"And do you really believe all the sailors tell you?" asked Marko, turning his head towards the ceiling with a yawn: "they are full of lies. But tell me, how much have you saved?"

"Fifteen thalers, father," answered Yuray.

"That's not much; Roko Tanfara brought back twenty. Give me another, and then to bed, and to-morrow after prayers, go and pay a visit to your uncle Yosa and aunt Maria."

"Naturally," put in the mother.

As soon as his father had drunk his glass of wine, he stood up and lazily went out. Lutsa lit a little oil lamp and followed her husband. Yuray rested his head on his elbows, and remained in that position. From the room above there began to penetrate the deep and rhythmic snoring of his parents, which completed the picture of daily domestic life. Yuray, his head entirely occupied with one dreadful sentiment,

began to listen attentively to the snoring. That every-day occurrence seemed to him something mysterious that marked the passage of the night, of everything that passes away for ever, and he began to count the snores. He counted a hundred, two hundred, when a loud noise and a hoarse voice startled him from his reverie. Their cock was the first to decide to break the stillness of the village, and then the rest joined in rivalry.

As soon as all was quiet again, a terror gripped Yuray, and he remembered all the tales of his childhood, how the white graves round the Lord of Angels opened and the dead came out, especially the newly buried who had not yet grown accustomed to the solitude. There was the poor girl, Maritsa, who never knew of his love, who had only learnt that very evening, and was now hurrying to him to receive the ring. A flame played upon the table, something crackled among the sparks, and Yuray, in terror, sprang to his feet. But that lasted only a second, for his real character, his farming and seafaring strength, overcame his momentary weakness, and with bowed head he began to recite prayers for her soul. Then he sat down again, put his weary head on his folded arms, and fell asleep.

Lutsa, as usual, was the first astir, and found her son thus; she lit the fire, brewed coffee, put it before him, and gently pushed him. The lad stood up, and looked sleepily, half unconsciously at his mother. At

last he took out his handsome new metal tobacco box, put some tobacco in a paper, rolled a cigarette, and began to puff. His mother sat opposite, with lowered eyes, tapping with her fingers on the table.

"Mother, I will not go out to-day."

"Not even to church?" she asked, without raising her eyes.

"Nowhere. I will lie down in the little room, and you can tell people that I am ill."

"That were a sin. I had a dream last night, just before waking, at the dawn, when God sends dreams."

Lutsa really wanted Yuray to ask what her dream was, but as she did not hear his voice, she continued in a low monotonous tone, her eyes downcast:

"I dreamt of the poor maid, of the Povareta; she came to me to the house when I was alone, at dusk. She came, poor child, pale and weeping, with her poor arm in bandages. She led me to the window, and with her whole arm pointed out to the sea, and to a great ship upon it, and you were on the ship. And she, poor girl, said sobbing, 'There he is! He is coming! But I cannot . . . this poor arm drags me down, down to the very depths. Let him take Pava!"

Lutsa ceased, wiping her eyes upon her sleeve.

Long they were silent; then the mother raised her eyes, and looked at his face, on which there was gradually returning the joy of living.

At length he asked in a broken voice:

"Is that true, mother?"

"Yes, my son, and my witness is the blessed Lord of Angels."

"Well, mother, let God's will be done . . . Povareta . . . Poor child . . . Poor little girl . . . "

HODJA SALEEK

By Svetozar Corovich

Svetozar Corovich was born in 1875 at Mostar in Herzegovina, a town and province that was occupied by the Austro-Hungarians in 1878 and annexed in 1908 and now belongs to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. He had little education for he had only been through the primary school and a commercial school. He lived all his life at Mostar, where he had a chance to study in the shop of his father, the types, characters and manners of his native country. He took an active part in public affairs and with some friends, founded the first literary review at Mostar and contributed largely to the progress in his country of literary education. During the war he was interned in a Hungarian prison, being suspected by the Austrian authorities, and there caught tuberculosis. He died in November, 1918, happy in having seen the liberating Serbian Army of his native country reach Mostar, when a detachment honored him by passing in review before his house. Although he was very careful about his work he nevertheless had great facility and wrote many volumes of stories, a number of plays, and made some successful attempts at novels.

HODJA SALEEK

SVETOZAR COROVICH

THE very first rays of the morning sun, stealing through the thick mulberry leaves to dance with fairy tread upon the little babbling brook, always found Hodja Saleek alert and bright, as he took his stroll through his garden, stopping ever and anon under some tree to examine with critical eye the coming fruit. He was proud of his garden; for it did not extend to a depth of over fifteen meters and yet was planted with every kind and size of fruit tree, whose branches interlaced to provide him with an ever-pleasant leafy canopy, and under whose verdant shelter, even in the hottest weather, he could enjoy refreshing shade. Underneath the fruit trees waved luxuriant grass, and his eye reposed contentedly on all his succulent greenstuffs—spinach, cabbages, vegetable-marrows and the red-blue flesh of many a ripening tomato. The Hodja's garden, indeed, was often as gay and variegated as any grocer's shop. At the end of it, the little brook slipped along its subtle course, scarcely visible for the long grass, the flowers and the shrubs overhanging it upon either side. But Hodja understood well how to make use of the little stream; had he not himself dug the long irrigating-channel that brought fertilising draughts to his thirsty garden? The brook brought the water, and

the Hodja did the watering; he did not believe in paying wages for that! With his long white beard, his white breeches and thin shirt, and his little white cap on his shaven head, there was Hodja—barefooted, paddling in the little watercourse, scattering the water over the garden with his biggish wooden spade. At other times you might see him with his little bent hoe, gently working the soil around the root of every fruit tree, and giving special care to the young maize. After which, he would lie down to rest upon the grass, not minding if he was occasionally overtaken by a little nap, nor even if, after his snooze, some little bits of grass or thistle adhers to his beard and his clothes.

It was after such siestas in the garden that Hodja Saleek might be seen with his hoe and his shovel, throwing them over his shoulder before making his way through the rickety, old doorway into the house. His house was smallish, time-worn, dilapidated; the doorway, with its crumbling posts and lintel, threatened to come down upon the visitor's head. Windows there were none; but there were little holes in the wall that would very well have accommodated the nose of a rifle; these the Hodja used to speak of facetiously as "my little gun-holes." The unpaved courtyard was quite large, and near the doorway—rotten, of course! —flourished two blue-grey brook-willows, whose powerful fragrance scented the whole place. Under the crooked walls flowering rose bushes yellowed and

reddened with the progress of the seasons, planted between a couple of luxuriant oleanders which prodigally adorned with their topmost fronds the crumbling caves, where birds had nested for goodness knows how many a generation. The carnations, sweet basil and the various medicinal herbs in the centre of the courtyard were surrounded by a thick, tough grass, and through the yard the little stream threaded its tortuous way.

Hodja Saleek always drank his coffee in the courtyard. He loved to splash his dirty, bare feet about in the streamlet, and then to lie full-length upon the grass under the oleanders. Here he would take his great, long pipe, and listening to the quiet murmur of the brook lazily sip his coffee in the scent-laden air.

In the courtyard, too, he took his lunch, and that, usually, two hours before noon, when, as he used to say, the clock struck in his inside. His loaf of bread and pennyworth of cheese he ate with so sweet a relish that he never thought of meat.

Sometimes after lunch he would go into his room to dress himself up. Nobody ever cleaned that little room. It was full of dust and cobwebs. Just as he became adorned in the garden, lying on the grass, with adhesive bits of thistle and grass, so here in his little room he became decorated with spiders' webs—sticky spiders' webs upon his face, his beard and his clothes. The apartment made no claim to furniture of any

kind, save a dirty old mattress, hard and thin, and an ancient time-piece hanging upon the wall. This clock Hodja Saleek looked upon as a necessary evil. He always attended to it himself. He wound it up, and set it right, taking off the large minute-hand; for two hands confused him—besides, what did he care for minutes? He only reckoned by hours! . . . From a certain spot above the mattress, the Hodja drew out his clothes; big, wide baggy breeches of blue, a sleeved waistcoat, and a long, blue robe without sleeves—moth-eaten round the bottom,—looking as if it had been pierced with bullets. He always belted himself with an enormously broad girdle, and his ample blue robe floated around him as a proper priestly mantle should. His broad red fez (with blue tassel) he stiffened inside with layers of paper, before winding around it his big, white turban. Such was his headgear—perched a little on one side, almost as if he had been tipsy. He never forgot his great spectacles. For these he had no special case, so he popped them in his turban, so that from its folds you might always see one glass peeping out. Never wearing socks, he used to slip on a pair of wooden clogs, in which he shuffled along, always making a tremendous dust, to the great annoyance of the Austrians, who are rather touchy in regard to dust.

When he had quite finished dressing, Hodja Saleek never omitted to put over his shoulder a fairly large

talisman bag, made of fine red stuff, tastily worked, from which always peeped out three old smutty Turkish books and some sheets of clean paper; and then, as if it had been a little pistol, stuck in his girdle was a yellowish old bronze inkhorn overfull of quill pens and ink of his own making.

Thus equipped, Hodja would set out for the town, giving the Turkish greeting to all the townsfolk, regardless of their creed, and patting the head of every child that came under his hand. Everybody returned the Hodja's salutations. The women, both young and old, stood up and prepared to greet him before he reached them, and rarely did anyone neglect to ask after his health. It was, indeed, evident on all hands that Hodja Saleek was a favourite with the womenfolk.

"Effendia! Effendia!" some old woman would cry to him, right in the middle of the town, and catching hold of his robe. "Oh, my grandchild has fallen sick of something or other, and I fear he must have been bewitched. I beg thee, give me a talisman," she would say, bowing and scraping around the Hodja, and still keeping hold of his mantle.

Hodja Saleek immediately puts his hand upon his bag, draws out a book, puts his spectacles on the end of his nose, and consults his book.

"Has he been ill long?" he asks as seriously and calmly as any doctor.

"Not three days."

"And doesn't he know where the pain is?"

"Pains all over his inside!"

Hodja sighs, and not lifting his eyes from his book begins to shake his head: "Seest thau, he must have struck upon the devils' night-dance. How came it that ye let him go? He might have paid for it with his life."

Putting his hand out to the old woman that she may hold his book for him, he at once opens his inkhorn, takes out his pen and paper, goes to the nearest wall, and, leaning his leg against it, writes out, in that fashion, two or three Turkish "prescriptions."

"One 'prescription,'" he says, "to be put under the child's head when he sleeps; one to be sewn in his shirt, and one to be put into water! Then let him drink of the water!"

The old woman gives him a twopenny-piece, and the Hodja moves on down the town—probably with many such encounters and stoppages. There were, indeed, mornings when he was pulled up every four or five steps; mornings when his very fingers grew stiff and tired from overmuch writing. The consultations were various: one had a sick cow, another a sick horse or some other living creature in a bad way, or it might be that some young maid was in love, or that some matron had bother with her husband, because he had gone off into bad paths of late.

For each and all these, Hodja was called upon to write his "prescription," and was acclaimed by the townsfolk as an unfailing worker of wonders.

The shopkeepers too, would call in Hodja, give him little cups of black coffee, offer him tobacco and even bread, only that he might stay and linger in their shops. They liked him to make their premises a kind of office. They knew that he was sought after by the peasants, that all sorts of people gathered round him, so they hoped to do a stroke of business on their own account, by the way.

But the Hodja transacted most of his business at home, towards evening, when he returned from the town. There at his house he was awaited by all those who did not want the general public to know anything about their private affairs, and who did not dare to catch the Hodja by the sleeve upon the street in broad daylight. In a word, these evening-time customers were the prettiest and the most animated; for they were almost all from the younger women and the girls.

For them the Hodja wrote his "prescriptions" in the courtyard. He used to order them all to take a seat on the grass, near the little stream, and then he would sit down beside them, taking off his clogs and putting his feet in the water. With inkpot at side, paper on knee, looking round on them all, he gets ready to do his writing.

"What aileth thee, then?" he asks the first girl sitting near him, alternately nibbling his pen and cleaning it upon his trousers.

The girl is shy. She blushes. She picks at the grass around her, and throws little handfuls of it into the brook.

"Sure thou art under some spell!" says Hodja. Slightly shrugging her shoulders, the girls plucks at the grass still more, and glances sideways for relief, up there above the door, where the Hodja's pet sparrow—afraid of nobody—sports with his mate.

"Hmm! Thou has lost thy tongue!" exclaims the Hodga with a rogueish laugh, glancing up too, towards the sparrow.

"But I know a spell is over thee,"—he continues; "some young fellow has cast his eye upon thee, and now thine heart is as big as a loaf, and ready to break thy sides!"

"Agh!" sighs the girl almost inaudibly, and turns and stares at the mole on Hodja's left cheek, and . . . only listens. . . .

"And that youngster" probes the Hodja," thou hast begun to run after him, and now thy heart within thee is more like unto a loaf . . ."

With this, Hodja spreads out his sheet of paper, and waves his pen in the air.

"Now, what wilt thou?" he asks. "Wouldst thou that this desire should wither in thine heart, or

wouldst thou that this youth be closer drawn to thee?''

The poor girl hesitates, covers her face with her hands, and not wishing that anyone else should hear her, putting her pretty head right against the Hodja's ear, she whispers: ''Yes, I would that he follow me!''

Whereon, Hodja Saleek smiles, winks a little at the other women, and writes his ''prescription!''

In half an hour Hodja manages to write quite a number of prescriptions, and every customer goes away perfectly satisfied, leaving upon the grass by Hodja's inkstand her twopenny-piece. Contentedly Hodja counts over the coins when he is alone; weighs them in his palm, counts them a second time, carries them to his tiny room, and deposits them safely in his mouldy old money-belt.

In this fashion came and went the days, and we could hardly have told you anything more about Hodja, nor should we have begun this story at all, if something had not happened which nobody could have foreseen; that is to say, if a most unusual ''customer'' had not appeared one evening—a customer the like of which he had never before seen, and the like of which, in all probability, he will never see again.

It was about the lovely close of a warm summer day, Thursday evening, after sunset prayer. Hodja had made his ablutions, had prayed in the early moonlight, and was preparing to go to bed in the court-

yard, where he hoped to gain more respite from the fleas than in his own room, when somebody touched his door-knocker, gently, timidly. Hodja was just thinking of a plan of campaign against the chirping crickets—he could not stand any kind of singing, and least of all from crickets—and at first he did not move. The knock was repeated.

"Whoever upon earth can it be?" muttered he, going unwillingly and somewhat discomfited towards the door.

"Who art thou?" he questioned from behind the door, peeping through a hole, if perchance he might descry.

"I," came back the answer in a whisper.

"Is it man, or is it woman?"

"Woman."

Hodja stood for a moment quite still, bethought himself, lifted the latch, and opened the door. Enveloped in a big shawl—though it did not conceal her graceful curve of limb—glancing timidly around on every side, a tall female figure entered his courtyard, where the richness of her attire could be better seen—her long, golden, handworked girdle, and the ample, silk divided-skirt,—so ample that it touched the ground. The figure moved across the yard, and the astonished Hodja after her.

"Are we alone?" the lady asked of him.

"Allah be praised, alone we are!"—answered

Hodja, turning around to assure himself that they actually were alone.

"Effendia, I am come for a talisman."

Saying which, she drew nearer, sat upon the grass by the brook, and removed her shawl. Involuntarily, Hodja started back when he saw her. The long, feminine face shone in the moonlight whiter than snow. Then a slight flush suffused the countenance. Above the straight and well-formed nose sparkled two large blue eyes—it seemed to Hodja like two ripening plums from his own beloved garden—and the eyes were overarched by well-defined, black brows. The compressed lips had a certain fulness and richness, while the right cheek seemed to be enhanced by a little black mole—like black coral! Her apparel was that of a Pasha's lady. Her luxuriant and wavy hair was crowned with a fez adorned with pearls, while from the full, white throat there hung necklaces of golden ducats and of pearls, falling nearly to the breast. The sleeves of her gold-embroidered blouse were not so thick as to hide the shapely arms; from the coloured girdle hung a long tassel, so long that it often touched her glittering slippers.

"In Allah's name, say! what art thou?—Apparition, fairy—what?" cried the Hodja with eyes riveted upon his visitor, and outspread hands extended with a strange rigidity.

She smoothed her hair; toyed restlessly with the girdle tassel.

"Neither monster, sprite nor fairy,"—came the voice,—"but a married woman, who has no time for waiting, or for argument. The talisman give to me and let me go!"

"And wherefore need'st thou talisman?" questioned Hodja, stiff, immobile, with arms still outspread.

"I will tell thee all; only give me the paper."

The Hodja made an impatient gesture with an evident display of emotion, and moved in the direction of the courtyard door. Then he turned again, and went to his little room, whence he brought out not inkhorn and paper but his old money-belt! Again he went back, and brought out this time his inkhorn and his talisman bag. But there was something weird and strange in the air; the inkhorn upset itself, and nearly all the ink was spilt upon his white breeches. He gallantly disregarded the misfortune.

"What ails thee?" he asked of his fair visitor in a low voice, sitting down near her, with his shoulder close against hers.

In silence she glanced over the willows, the oleanders and the roof of Hodja's dwelling, till her gaze seemed to rest upon the more distant statues of the courtyard of Atlagitch, which almost concealed the slender, pencil-like minaret of the Begovitch mosque,

though its glittering Crescent was visible above the trees.

"I come to thee for a cure for my master,"—she now began with trembling voice, keeping her eyes straight in front of her. "Once I used to be as dear to him as the very apple of his eye, and he cared for me as no one in the world was ever cared for, but now I am sometimes not even allowed to breathe. I seem no longer to give him pleasure. He has become tired of me. And yet his eyes follow me about with a suspicious look at every step I take! Nor does he now allow me even to dress myself nicely—nor anything else. I think I shall run away from him. I am come here for counsel."

Hodja clutches his beard; he wipes the perspiration from his face:

"And who is thy lord?" he asks.

"Matan Pilinoratz."

"And thine own name?"

"Lucia!"

"And are you not a Latin?"

"I am."

Hodja is breathing hard. He grasps his book and opens it.

"It is written" . . .—thus he began to read according to ancient habit, but he is not his old self. "It is written," he begins again.

And then, as if he had thought out something all of

a sudden, he throws down his venerable book upon the grass, and seizes the lady Lucia by the hand.

"And what wilt thou with a talisman?" he asks in a whisper.—"Only look at him with those eyes of thine, and he will be quiet as a lamb. Here is the talisman!"

Whereon Hodja pressed her hand with such emotion and passion that she had almost screamed, and his gaze was so sharp that she felt he could read the depths of her very soul.

"Eh, if only I were in his shoes!" he muttered.

Quicker than thought, Lucia drew herself up to her full stature, and snatched her hand from his.

"Play me no jokes, Effendia, but write!" she said sharply and with marked abruptness. "If you think I shall not pay, why here's your money in advance!"

And from her necklace she plucked a golden ducat, and without a look at him threw it on the grass at his feet.

"For whom is this money?" asks Hodja thickly, throwing the coin from him. "I will give you what talisman you will—but for money—Never!"

A certain dizziness seized him, a strange quivering bringing back days of long ago, when he was still a youth, when he used to play nightly pranks upon the town, and serenade the pretty girls, to get a glimpse of them as they spied him from their windows through the shrubs and flowers. Then with trembling hand

he took his pen, and with eyes still fixed upon Lucia he began to scribble some Turkish words. Were they really words?—for the life of him he couldn't have told you their meaning!

"Here it is!"— he murmured. "And let him drink the water from it." And as he held the paper out to her, he again seized her hand.

"Eh, if only I were in his place!"

Again Lucia drew her hand sharply away from his. Then catching hold of the paper, she rose and drawing her shawl around her, pushed away with her slipper the gold ducat, so that it nearly rolled into the brook.

"By my soul, Effendia, you're a lusty fellow!" she exclaimed. "I've always heard it said you were as quiet and meek as any saint, but you are a scoundrel—a devil."

"A scoundrel! A devil!" repeated Hodja. "A scoundrel, a devil!"

Again seizing her arm, he drew her towards himself.

"Remain a little longer!" he whispered.

"It is enough!"—she laughed, pushing him away. "The paper is ready! What more do I want!"

With a rapid movement she had drawn back, opened the door, and vanished.

"She is fair enough for Paradise!" the Hodja murmured, as he peered after her in the darkness. He paid no more heed to the chirping of the crickets, though they were making more noise than ever.

Neither did he bolt the door. After standing still a long while, he sat down upon the spot where she had sat. He noticed the ducat, took it in his palm, and turned it over many times, regarding it contemplatively as it glistened in the moonlight.

"Ah, me! Ah, me!" he sighed again, putting his feet in the stream. "Never in all my life did I fall on such misfortune. But what a picture of a woman!"

A gentle wind was blowing, and the aroma of the neighbouring foliage made him drowsy. As he inhaled the fragrance of the zephyr, he brought himself to think that it was the aroma from her hair!

He groaned like one in pain.

"A lovely figure! I would teach that housemaster of hers how to treat a wife.—To think that *she* should be downtrodden! I'd give *him* no talisman! A thrashing rather!"

"Eh, if only I were younger" He closed his eyes, and sought for sleep.

"What a pity she's a Latin!" he continued, unable to forget the recent meeting. "And to think that *he*, a Latin, should kiss such lips and eyes! A talisman indeed! Rather, such a trouncing that no whole bone is left in all his body! Matan Pilinoratz! He to have such a woman in his house! And they say that Allah loves all equally!"

With such surface indications of the storm within,

Hodja turned and tossed till dawn should come. The more he strove to divert his thoughts, the more was Lucia before his eyes. She filled his thoughts. When he rose, his eyes looked as if he had been peeling onions, the lids were swollen, and his face pallid and haggard.

"Wretch that I am!"—he cried, getting up. "Three such nights, and I am done for!"

Ten whole days, like a half-demented person, the Hodja paced his courtyard and his garden. He forgot about the watering and the digging; he forgot that the sun was scorching up his fruit. It seemed no affair of his that much of it was falling parched and browned to the ground. He drank a great deal of coffee. He smoked inordinately; his long *chibouk* was hardly ever out of his mouth. He did not go into the town—really, he had not the courage for that, for he knew all too well how sick and miserable he looked, and he knew that everybody would be asking him the reason. He wrote no talismans; he gave it out that he was ill, and simply could not hold a pen. He even turned away some friends who had come a long distance specially to see what ailed him.

"What do you want?" he growled from within.

"We have come to see you!"

"I'm not a bear, that I should be put on view for you!"

"But we heard you were ill!"

"Well, now you've heard I'm not, and get away with you home!"

So his friends departed, rather worried about him, and asking themselves on the way home whether much learning had not made the Hodja mad.

But the eleventh day found him venturing out into the town, properly dressed, and as spruce as he ever was—for Bairam. He had washed his breeches in the brook, so that they looked like new; mended carefully his coat; put on a new girdle, and wound a new turban round his fez. His shuffling, wooden-soled slippers, indeed, made dust enough as he walked, but he had fastened them today with string, and his feet were also cleaner than usual.

"Where is the house of Matan Pilinoratz?" he asked some children who were rushing pell-mell out of school. It was hard to get an answer out of the youngsters: "That way! long by the hill—first house on the right! The house with the new fence, and the old knocker." Thus did they breathlessly direct him to the house of Matan Pilinoratz.

The Hodja patted them on the head, gave them a penny to buy some nuts, and proceeded as they had told him, slowly and with bowed head; stopping after every step, either to set his turban right, or to arrange his girdle, or to fasten his shoe-latchet. At length he reached the very house.

"Now, only to speak nicely, and not to get confused!" he breathed. Slowly, rather furtively, with many a turn to see if he were noticed, he stole up to the door, and raised the knocker.

"Who's that?" called a ringing female voice from the yard.

Hodja started; his beard almost seemed to rustle.

"I,"—he answered in a whisper. "We know each other!"

The pitter-patter of slippers was heard across a paved yard, the rustle of garments, the grating of a bolt, and the door was open.

"Ah, Effendia!" exclaimed Lucia with a start of astonishment—"it is you!"

"Me thou seest!" replied Hodja with a wave of the hand. "Yes, I am come,"—repeats Hodja,—"and it may be that the devil has brought me!"

"By why?" she asked, laughing at him.

The Hodja's beard seemed literally to wave, his eyes glistened, and his voice trembled, as he replied:

"In truth I have come to ask of you a talisman. I have been giving them all my life to all the world, and now upon my soul, it is I who should ask one! And it is from you I ask it!

Lucia clapped her hands upon her knees; then she looked him straight in the face. So close was she, that he felt the whisp of her hair upon his forehead.

"I?" she asked.

"Yes, thee, I swear it! For since thou camest on that night the devil has driven me out of my wits, and I think of nothing else but thee. A scandal this, at my age. Thou hast bewitched me, I do swear it!"

Lucia very naughtily put her nose right up against the Hodja's, and pulled his beard.

"But who could bewitch *thee?*" she asked.

The Hodja began to forget himself.

"Look here! don't make a joke of it," said he grimly, "but give me either some talisman or else a medicine of some sort, for I can't go on like this! I swear I'm going mad!"

Then, suddenly, the Hodja caught the hand which had pulled his beard, and carried it to his lips, and, before Lucia could withdraw it, he had bitten deeply into it the imprint of his teeth.

ETERNITY

By Janko Veselinovich

JANKO VESELINOVICH was born in Sabach, Serbia, and graduated from the Normal School for primary teachers. While a schoolmaster in a village school he devoted himself to reading Serbian books to complete his inadequate education. The example of Lazarovich inspired him most of all and he began to write stories which were very sympathetically received. Very young, full of talent, and popular from the very beginning, he wasted his youth and his health without a thought of the morrow. Then poverty came upon him—he had only a small government post at Belgrade, or a job as editor of some unimportant review—and illness. The struggle to live, and the miseries of political life under the régime of the two last Obrenovichi (the kings Milan and Alexander) finally brought about his death which occurred in 1904. Gifted with a fertile imagination and naturally prolific he wrote half a hundred stories, six novels, two plays and various literary essays.

ETERNITY

By Janko Veselinovich

I

There were once two neighbours. They lived together happily like brothers. Neither, without the other, liked to drink a glass of brandy; neither would have hurt the other for all the treasures of this world. Both had only sons, of the same year, and the children loved each other as their fathers did.

If there was work to do, they did it together; if a spinning feast, they were both at the spinning feast; if a wedding they were both at the wedding.

They were always together and always with their arms round each other's necks. And as they went they would sing, like two fair maidens. Dear children! The name of one was Branko and of the other Iliya.

Parents held these two up as examples to their children. "Why do you quarrel, why are you rude to each other! Look at Branko and Iliya and be ashamed of yourselves. Even brothers do not love each other as they do."

On a Sunday morning Branko called out to Iliya.

"Yes" answered Iliya.

"I have something to tell you."

"Well, what is it!"

"I asked Father if you and I could be made brothers."

"And what did he say!" asked Iliya with interest.

"He said, 'Good luck to you, my lad, I have been expecting that for sometime.' "

Iliya put his hands round Branko's neck and cried joyfully "Thank God, and when shall we go to church!"

"To-day, get ready."

They went joyfully to prepare for the ceremony. They put on the finest things they had, kissed their parents' hands, and betook themselves to the holy church.

The dew was shining on the grass and leaves, as if God had scattered precious stones over this sinful earth.

The people turned to look after them and marvelled "God, give them happiness! God, give them health!"

The old priest had just finished matins, and sat down under a sweet smelling lime tree, which spread its branches in front of the church, the two boys standing before him.

"Good morning."

"God keep you, children."

They held out their hands to him saying, "Bless us, Father."

"God bless you. What can I do for you?"

"Father, we have come to be made brothers, for you to read us the service" said Branko.

"I will, children," said the old man: "But whose children are you!" They told him.

"But do you know what you become from the hour when you are made brothers?"

"We have heard something about it from our elders, and you will teach us," said Branko.

"I will, my son. But do you truly love each other!" the old priest asked, and looked at both.

"Father," said Iliya, "if we were brothers, if we had laid on one bosom, we could love each other no better. In the mountains, in the water, in the grave itself, one will follow the other."

The priest looked at the shining face of Iliya, he looked at the abundant zeal in the eyes of Branko, and he said:

"Very good, my children. To-day, after the Holy liturgy, I will read you the service, and make you brothers."

And when divine service was finished, the priest led them to the altar, and completed the ceremony.

When they came out of the church, they felt uplifted in spirit, they felt a sweet communion which was like a holy hand joining their hearts. With eyes full of tears, they looked at each other, and stretched out their hands one to the other.

"Brother, I am yours to the grave," said Branko

"Brother, both to the grave and in the grave I am yours," said Iliya.

The priest raised his old hands above their heads, and the people wept for joy.

II

They had never been apart before, but from that day they were united in everything. They shared one dish, slept on one bed, the arm of one was a pillow for the other. But that was not enough for them! If they could, they would have worn one cap and one shirt!

One day Iliya said "Brother! My Father says that he is arranging for me to be married."

"And so is mine," said Branko.

"You will be my best man."

"Of course, I shall be very happy when I lead your bride by the hand. Do you know brother, I should not forgive you if you gave my place to another."

"I should never do that," said Iliya.

"If I were to die and you did not invite me to be best man, I should not forgive you," said Branko.

"God be with you, what are you saying?"

Branko smiled; "I say it would be hard for me to bear, even if I were dead! But come, what girl shall we have for you?"

And then they canvassed far and wide the subject

of girls. It was late in the night when sleep shut their eyelids.

Next day, Branko went up with the cart into the forest to bring wood. Iliya stayed at home to re-dig some hedges which were falling over. He finished his work; the sun was almost at noon, and he called to Branko's mother:—

"Has my brother come?"

"Not yet."

"Why is he so long?"

"I don't know, dear."

"Will you tell me when he comes?"

"Yes, my lad."

He pottered about the bee-hives, and then went into the orchard. The day passed. The sun was at the horizon, and still no Branko.

A certain uneasiness came over both houses. A dark presentiment darted like a snake under the threshold of the house, but still nobody dared to say a word.

"He must have overslept himself" said Iliya's father.

They seized on this idea. Indeed, all wished to think that he had overslept himself, but a different thought gripped their hearts. Iliya kept walking about, and every few minutes he would look out of the window. At last he could stand it no longer.

"I am going to look for him," he said and set off for the gate.

At that instant the cart rattled up and came to a standstill at the gate.

All ran up. The cart was empty; no Branko. In wonder and consternation they stood and gazed. No one could speak a word. Iliya had hardly come to himself, when he rushed down the street as though he were mad, and then on to the forest to look for his brother.

He staggered on for a long distance. Night had fallen. The moon was looking through the already faded leaves, which mournfully rustled on the trees, when he found his brother.

Horrible! Branko lay with his head bent back, almost cut through. A stream of coagulated blood lay around him like a marsh. Near him lay an axe, all bloody.

Iliya fell upon him. He kissed him, embraced him, called:—in vain. His voice groaned through the forest with a dull stifled tone, as though it came from below the ground.

The household arrived. The funeral dirges rose, far into the sky. The dead body was lifted on to a cart, which a peasant had brought, and carried home.

They mourned him, and buried him. They began to investigate the crime. Every living being strove to find the murderer, but in vain. Some were sus-

pected and arrested, but nothing was proved. No living person could say who killed Branko.

III

A year passed. The accused lay in prison, but the matter could not be cleared up.

Branko's parents mourned him, and then were comforted. The wound is there still in the heart, it burns and aches, but an unhappy man must reconcile himself to life. They thought they would not be able to outlive Branko, but yet they lived. It is truly said "it is not sorrow which drives out the soul, but the hour of fate."

Meanwhile, Iliya's parents were already planning for their son in other ways. The mother needed a substitute and the father a servant; both of them needed happiness. Human desire is an insatiable griffin. It devours all that there is in the world, and is still unsatisfied. It was not enough for them that their son was alive, they desired a daughter-in-law also, in order to have a grandchild.

They began, indirectly, to intimate their wishes to Iliya. When they mentioned it to him, he shed tears: "How can I forget my brother!" On that day he neither ate nor drank. He fled from every living creature.

But continual dropping wears away the stone. Day

by day, always the same demand. The day came when he was able to obey about his marriage. And when one day both the father and the mother of his brother told him that it was better that he should marry, he bowed his head like an ox under the yoke.

They found him a maiden fair and gentle like the flower of a rose. They began to make preparations, they invited the guests. His senior guest was Branko's father.

His father called Iliya to him and said "Laddie, whom will you have for best man?"

"I have a best man, Father," he said.

The father shrugged his shoulders. Iliya went up to the churchyard. In the east rose the full moon; in the west was still a little sunset. Peace reigned as in the grave. Fireflies were flitting hither and thither, and fell on the withered grass, which was already covered with dew. From afar came the cry of the owl. Iliya's heart beat fast. He strode up to the graves and plunged on from one to another. At last he stood still. He had come to the grave of his brother.

He stood over the grave. He crossed himself and kissed the cross, then he bent down over the hummock and called out "Brother!"

A strongish breeze was blowing, and ruffled the hair on his head. A light shudder passed over him when he heard a voice which sounded from the grave.

"I am listening, Brother."

"I am going to marry."

"Good luck to you," answered the voice from the grave. "I am keeping my word."

"I hoped you would."

"I am the best man."

"The wedding is on Sunday."

"Good."

"Shall we wait for you?"

"No, when the time comes, I shall be there. Thank you for having remembered me."

The voice was silent.

"Brother!" No answer.

"Brother! Brother!"

Silence . . . only the breeze stirred the withered grass. He rose; sweat dropped from his forehead.

The moon rose higher and higher. The stars sparsely scattered, twinkled. Some went quite out and then shone with new light; some dashed across the sky like lightning, leaving behind them a shining track. He returned home.

A slight shudder passed over his body, his teeth chattered and his head was confused as if he were drunk. When he entered the house, he said to his father who was sitting by the fire: "My brother will come."

Sunday dawned, the day of the wedding. The in-

vited guests collected. Such beauty, glitter and wealth! You could not take your eyes off it! All were on their feet ready for the ride, but awaited the command of the chief-guest. Then the chief-guest called out: "Go!" The horsemen mounted their fiery steeds, the others took their seats in the carriages and made a bow to the bride in the name of God.

A splendid show! In front the standard bearer, the standard entirely covering him. The day was fine, the sun shone brightly, and little birds were twittering. In the air were floating white cobwebs, soft as down, falling on the clothes of the guests. Songs resounded, salvo after salvo thundered. Suddenly, all were silent. Just at the crossway which cuts the road leading out of the village, stood a horseman in wedding attire looking at the guests. All looked in that direction and recognized Branko. Just as he used to be except that his face was somewhat paler and less open, and his eyes more dim. A strange smile was playing around his lips, a smile which attracted and at the same time repelled. As Iliya looked at him his eyes shone with joy; he struck his horse with his stirrup and hastened to his friend.

"Brother!"

"Yes, Brother."

"Oh, you have actually come!"

"Could you doubt it?"

"Thank you, Brother!"

"Thank you, that you remembered me."

His happy parents hastened to him. "Son!" called his father: "Darling!" cried his mother.

"It is I, it is I," he said, and smiled.

"Let your mother kiss you, my son."

"No, Mother. I am not of this world. Peace is my country. Only love of my brother could bring me back out of my kingdom. That alone has power to bring back the dead. Do not come near me, Mother, and if you do come near, you must not kiss me."

Sorrow fell on the mother's heart, she wept forlorn.

"But say something to your mother."

"I have nothing to say to you," he answered.

"Who killed you, my dear?"

He only made a gesture with his hand.

"I have come to my brother's wedding. To-day is the time for rejoicing. When you come to me, I will talk to you." He mingled with the horsemen.

The guests moved on, but no more joyous songs were raised, no more shots re-echoed. All eyes looked at Branko, and he smiled, smiled on all of them. He made his horse prance, and then rode up to his father's carriage. His mother asked:

"When shall I be with you, my son?"

"Soon: you will both be soon there. If you only knew, Mother, how beautiful it is there!" Again he smiled as the guests whispered among themselves:—

"It was a sin for Iliya to raise him."

"But they were pledged, friend."

They went on across the village and up to the house of the bride. They were warmly welcomed. The guests seated themselves at the laden table.

Branko went into the bride's outbuilding, and presented her with the best man's gifts; then he returned to the table and sat down between his father and mother.

"Eat, dear, eat," said his mother, and helped him to food. He only shook his head. "I am not hungry, Mother."

When they had put the joint on the table, they led forth the bride. He rose and received her from her brother, and began to serve the guests.

The guests rose from the table. According to custom, they danced a kolo, and then began to take leave. The bride also took leave of her relations and friends. Branko took her hand and led her to his parents.

"Father, let your daughter sit with you in the carriage." He helped the daughter-in-law to step in. He mounted his horse and rode up to the carriage.

"Farewell!"

"Farewell!"

They moved off, when they reached that crossroad, he made a gesture with his hand, and the guests stopped.

"Farewell," he said to his parents. "Soon we shall see each other again. I have prepared everything for

you there. Then we shall never part again. Do not weep, for that makes it harder for me there. If you wish to lighten my spirit, pray to God. Shed no tears. Each of your tears is a red hot stone falling upon my heart. Farewell."

Then he turned to Iliya. "Farewell, Brother."

"Must you go, Brother?"

"I go, but remember me, dear Brother, and come to me."

"I will come, Brother," said Iliya.

Branko separated himself from the guest, and stood at the side of the road; there he stood until all had gone past him. At the turning his mother looked back to see him once more, but he had vanished.

IV

A week went by. Iliya had almost forgotten his promise. One evening, just as he was closing his eyes, his brother appeared to him in a dream, and began to reproach him. He started up, rubbed his eyes, and said to his wife. "Give me my boots."

"Where are you going?" she asked him.

"Just give me my boots, and don't ask questions," he said sharply.

The wife rose and brought him the boots. He put them on quickly, took his coat and went out.

The night was clear. It was as quiet as in the grave; only the leaves rustled lightly, rustled as softly as if a dying man was whispering. A heavy dew wet his feet; he almost shivered from the freshness of the night. He advanced with rapid strides. Something heavy lay upon his heart. He felt that never again would he see his home, his wife, his father, or his mother. Unwillingly he bade farewell to each dear place.

"Farewell, old oak! Never more shall I rest under your thick shade. Farewell!" he whispered. A feeling of sadness softened him to tears, but he never thought of going back. He reached the graveyard. He made his way straight to the grave of his brother. As before, he took off his cap, kissed the cross, and called out:—

"Brother!"

"Yes, Brother!" answered his brother from the grave.

"I have come to see how you are."

"Then come, Brother."

"How shall I come?"

"This way."

He looked. On the right side of the hummock yawned an opening. Something froze within him. All at once he wished to fly, but his feet gave way under him, so that he could not move from the spot. He felt his body grow as cold as if he had not a drop

of blood. One thought after another, like glowing needles, passed across his brain and vanished as if carried by a whirlwind. Father, mother, wife, the old oak, all in an instant appeared before his eyes and vanished.

"Brother!"

He opened his mouth to answer, but the words died on his lips.

"Come!"

As though some force beyond his own will was moving him, he went forward, he put down first his right, then his left foot into the opening, and by a staircase began to descend into the grave. He shut his eyes so that he should not see; but when he felt hard ground under his feet, he involuntarily opened his eyes. O how wonderful was the sweetness and beauty, dear God! How bright was the daylight! He found himself in a corridor which shone with so much light that it dazzled him. Such beauty he had never imagined even in dreams. At times, when he was still a child, after listening to old fairy-tales, the teeming imagination of childhood had pictured for him a beauty like this. He rubbed his eyes, and looked again. He could not see from whence that beautiful light came, but it seemed to him that precious stones were shining there such as are sung of in songs. Wondering and amazed, he did not know what to do, but his feet bore him along, upright. He did not walk but fly: it

seemed to him that he had wings and was flying along the corridor.

All at once he found himself in a meadow. Such a sweet, such a beautiful meadow! He could not have imagined a meadow so lovely! The tenderest green, the most beautiful softness! On the velvet grass young lambs were playing; gaily coloured birds were singing on the green branches; it seemed to him that he understood their songs as if his own soul were singing them. A little river was winding among green trees. Light ripples were passing over the bright coloured stones, and running races with golden scaled fishes. He was bathed in something sweet and warm and enrapturing. He felt neither cold nor heat. His heart swelled and sweetness pervaded his blood. He felt that he no longer belonged to this earth; it was the same heavenly blessedness which God grants that the child shall feel in the arms of its mother, and the youth in the embrace of his beloved.

A little lamb came up to him and began to lick his hand. He snatched back his hand, and the lamb said to him, "Just let me lick away my blood, which is on your hand."

He started when the lamb spoke to him, and a shudder passed over him.

"How can it be your blood?" he asked in horror, and looked at his hand. The hand was indeed covered with blood.

"Poor man, it was because you slaughtered me," said the lamb meekly. It began to lick again. He was frightened. Another lamb came up to him, and it also began to lick him. One by one came the whole flock. He looked at his hands steeped in blood. Little birds began to fly down from the trees and perch on his shoulders.

"You killed us too. You took us little ones out of the nest," they said. "Our mothers twittered sadly after you, but you ate us up all the same."

"And you pushed me on to the ground, where a snake seized me and devoured me," said a little callow starling.

His hair stood up on end; sweat dropped from every hair of his head; his knees shook under him, he reeled and swooned, struck to the ground by fear.

V

He began to come to himself; he looked up and saw his brother.

"Brother, for God's sake, why did you call me?"

"Do not be frightened, Brother. See, your hands are clean. These honest little creatures have washed off their blood from them. You sinful people there on the earth think that God has not given life to anyone but you, and so you take life carelessly. But now look! You see they also have souls. They have their

mothers, their fathers, their brothers and sisters. Their hearts ache in the same way for their own, just as yours do for yours. But enough of that, the blood is washed out, you are forgiven. Come with me."

"But where, Brother?"

"To where I live. Into my palace. Look! You never have seen such palaces before!

He looked. A magnificent palace glittered in front of him. The walls were of precious stones, and around the palace was a splendid garden. Broad leaves made a heavenly shade, and rich fruits scattered their perfumes on all sides. The perfume refreshed him as though he had washed his face. He followed his brother light-hearted and serene of soul like a child. The paths on either side were planted with flowers, he breathed in their perfume and felt his chest expand.

"Brother, it is beautiful here" he said, enraptured with bliss.

"It is, indeed, Brother."

"We have no existence like this over there."

"You cannot even dream of it."

"You are blessed, Brother."

His brother smiled and taking his hand, led him into the palace. As they went along those shining corridors, a thought began to trouble Iliya. There was something he wished to ask his brother, but he had forgotten what it was. His brother led him into

a large hall beautifully decorated. The vaulting was painted in wonderful tints. Gay butterflies of many colours flitted hither and thither. In one corner was lighted a hanging lamp and the flame of the little wick was reflected from the shining walls and made a rainbow in the room.

"Sit down, Brother." He sat down.

"How are you, Brother, and how is my sister-in-law? Is she dutiful to our old parents?"

"All is well, Brother, all is peaceful and orderly." And again he was troubled by what he had forgotten.

"And my father and mother?"

"They also are well."

"And the old priest?"

"He also is well, though he is almost trembling with age."

"He is a saintly soul! Do you remember, Brother, how earnestly he prayed when he made us brothers! That is the way he prays, Brother."

Branko asked about everything, he wished to know about every trifle from beginning to end. Iliya talked and talked; and the longer he talked the more he wished to talk.

"Listen, Brother! It is time that we should part. You have seen here what no living person has ever seen. At all times wherever you go, sitting or standing, keep telling our sinful brothers what you have seen. Tell them how beautiful it is here. Tell them

to keep their souls from sin, not to take the life of others, to be loving and affectionate to one another. Love alone is needful for all. Love is on a level with the Lord and with his Son. It is broader than the heavenly vault, deeper than the abyss, stronger than the most powerful force. It is the greatest power in the world. It binds the child to the mother, it binds leaf to leaf, blade to blade, man to man. Its power is a divine power, it is the child of God. Remember, Brother!"

At this moment Iliya remembered what he had forgotten and he cried out:—"Brother, tell me who killed you?"

As he spoke, Branko's face darkened. In the middle of the vault appeared a drop of red blood shining like a ruby. It slowly glided down the vault and dropped on the wick of the lamp. The wick hissed mournfully, as if lamenting, and went out. A thick darkness fell, and across it, as though out of some abyss, the voice of Branko sounded like distant thunder:—

"Why do you shed innocent blood? Why do you shed it, you who know God? Alas for me! Fly Brother!"

A terrible storm began to blow. Iliya heard the palace of his brother crumbling; he stood waiting in terror for his hour of doom when something took hold of him and bore him away. He closed his eyes.

VI

He lay in a forest under an old elm. A wind was playing over his ruffled hair; bees were buzzing round him, the sun was shining brightly, and withered leaves were whispering sadly, as though they mourned the days of their freshness and greenness. Everything seen and felt made it clear that it was towards the end of early autumn.

He raised his head and looked about. The first thing he saw was a crab-apple near him, already overripe and fallen. He looked further. Forest, and again forest. "Where am I?" he thought.

He strained his mind to remember, and he remembered everything.

"Where have I been cast away?" He began to wander about the forest. There was no living being anywhere, except little birds twittering or bees humming, none else anywhere. He found a path and followed it. He walked and walked and then stood still; the path had come to an end. He looked in another direction, there was a path again. He went along it but it also vanished. So the day passed. Tired to death he threw himself on the ground. His veins were swollen with weariness, his mouth was parched with thirst. Oh, to go and get water! But he could walk no more. Both his legs were numb. He extended himself along the ground. He felt how

quickly his pulse was beating. His mind was confused. He thought vaguely about the forest, about water, about his village and home, about his brother, about recent events, about everything, and about everything at the same time. From the confusion of these thoughts his head drooped. Sleep imposed itself on the weary body, but he felt thirst torturing him.

"Hello, why are you lying there!" cried a middle-aged man to him. He heard a voice and looked at the man, but could not understand a word. The man raised him, and he stood up. He showed by a gesture that he wanted a drink. The man left him for a little and then brought him some water. He drank it up.

"Where do you come from?" asked the man.

Iliya looked at him.

"Where do you come from I say, from what village?"

"From Ognyanovitch."

"And where is that?"

"I don't know."

"There is no such village," said the man.

"Yes, there is," said he.

"Well there may be, but not hereabouts. One can see that you have a queer way of speaking, you must be from a long way off. But how did you get here?"

"I don't know."

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes."

"Come along then."

The man went on in front and Iliya after him. The man led him to a cabin, put out a chair for him, and said, "Sit down. I am alone here. You know it is the fall of the acorns, and I have driven my pigs into the forest, but you will be content with what God sends you."

He took out a little maize-cake, cheese and bacon. Iliya being so hungry, fell upon the food. The man looked at him with some satisfaction.

"What is your name?"

"Iliya."

"It is mine also. What is your surname?"

"Pakalyevitch."

"A strange surname. But tell me, do, how you came here."

"I do not know."

"He is dying of hunger" said the host to himself.

After supper he asked for water again. The man brought him some cold water from the spring.

"Listen, Friend! Lie down a little and rest yourself. I shall, in any case, be looking after the pigs to-night."

Iliya lay down. At first he slept, then he suddenly started out of a dream. It seemed to him that someone had hold of his throat by both hands. He opened

his eyes and looked round the cabin. There was no-one anywhere.

His sleep was spoilt. He poked the embers and sat down by the fire. His thoughts wandered in all directions. "Who is this man? What sort of strange speech has he? I can hardly understand him. How did I come here? Where is my own village, and what are my own people doing now at home?"

Just as he was sunk in all these thoughts, the host came in.

"What, you are not sleeping?"

"No."

"Why could you not sleep?"

"I cannot."

The man put a few twigs on the fire, took a stool and sat down. He twisted himself about a little and drew out of his belt a pouch of tobacco and a knife, cut into the tobacco, rubbed it, filled his pipe and lit it.

Iliya looked at him with wide-open eyes. Seeing the smoke curling out of his host's mouth he could not refrain from asking:—

"What are you doing?"

"Smoking."

"Smoking?"

"Yes, smoking."

"What is that?"

"Tobacco."

"What do you say?"

"Tobacco. Surely you know what tobacco is!"

"I do not know," said Iliya.

The host began to explain as well as he could what tobacco is. "I could do without bread but I cannot do without tobacco. It is a friend, a true friend." Iliya wondered.

"Here, look at it." He held out a pipe to him. Iliya drew one whiff, spluttered and coughed. His tears flowed. "That is nothing, I spluttered too the first time," said the host, "have a smoke."

Iliya made a gesture of refusal.

VII

As the days passed everything became more puzzling to Iliya. His namesake brought him into the village. He saw the houses there, large and well-planned and white-washed. He did not remember having seen anything like them. He saw the way the people ploughed and harrowed and dug; he was amazed when he saw a windmill; for all these things were to him divine miracles. He kept stopping in front of each little thing petrified, and the people marvelled at him.

"Good Lord, what a man you are, you don't know anything!"

He only shrugged his shoulders. They gathered round him as though he were a wonder. They laughed at his speech.

"It is like what the priest reads in church," said the peasants. And in truth his speech was similar to that in which divine service was read to them. So the people of this unfamiliar world began to jeer at him, and he almost hated them. This world was strange to him. There was nothing in it to make him want to stay. So one day he rose and went out of the village. He went from village to village seeking his own village. Whenever he told anyone the name of his village he received one and the same reply: "There is no such place."

He steeled himself to endure, he resolved to find his village or die. This world, these strange people, who ploughed with such wonderful ploughs, and then crumbled the rest of the earth with wooden claws, these people had nothing in common with him!

"I have strayed into a different race," he thought. "Here the speech is different and the jokes and games are different from those in my Ognyanovitch! O dear, what a full and happy life we lived there! There, in the thick shade of the walnut trees, we used to lie and rest with jests and happy laughter. What are my own people doing now at home? Father and mother must have nearly driven themselves distracted looking for me. If I could only find them, if I could only see them! If I could only find my own village. Oh what a relief it would be!"

Thinking thus, one day he fell asleep in the shade of a beech tree. And he dreamed a dream:—

He came to his own village, and everywhere he saw the same wonderful cottages as here; and the people there spoke the same way. He said a sentence, and they laughed and jeered at him. And he was weary at heart. He sought his father and mother, but they were not there. He sought his wife, but she was not there. He sought his friends, but they were not there. "Those are people of old," they said to him. "They are here no more. How is it that you know them?"

A great oppression came over him, and he wished to kill himself. Just as he was going to jump into a pond, there came up out of the pond first a head and then the figure of a man. He recognised his brother.

"Brother, for God's sake, where are you? Since we parted, a hundred wonders have fallen upon me! I cannot be myself again after all I have seen and heard. Tell me, Brother, for God's sake, where are my people? Where are my mother and my father and my wife? I am dying to see them."

His brother only made a gesture with his hand. "It is in vain, Brother; in vain you ask me, for I cannot tell you. But I can say who will tell you. Go from village to village, from town to town, and where you find Mirko Selakovitch, he will tell you. But Brother, what you were going to do is not brave, I thought you had a better heart. And besides, it is a sin, a deadly

sin, a deadly sin! If you do that, you will never see us again, neither me nor your family! You are a man, and must endure what fate ordains for you!"

Then his brother came up to him and touched his hand, and the hand was cold as a snake. He shivered.

The sun had set. The moon was two spears' length up. He crossed himself and began to seek for Mirko Selakovitch.

VIII

It was a summer day; the leaves were drooping with the heat. The day-star was burning hot; no bird made a sound, so oppressed were they. The village herd had collected round a well on the common.

Not a drop of water in the troughs! A traveler, thirsty and tired, came up to the well, and when he saw the cattle gathered together, he was sorry for them, and began to pour water into the trough. When the cattle were watered, he washed his face, and drank his fill. Then he stretched himself on the green grass near the well and slept like the dead. And we would have slept until God knows when, if a young girl had not come to the well and waked him with the creaking of the pole. He opened his eyes.

"Forgive me," said the girl. "I have wakened you. It is bad luck sleeping when the sun goes down."

"Where are you from, my girl?"

"I am from this village."

"And what is the name of the village?"

"You must be from a long way off, not to know what our village is called!"

"It is true I come from far away."

"It is called Selishty."

"Selishty?"

"Yes. The village has been re-settled here."

"Where from?"

"I don't know. Grandfather knows that, he can tell all about it."

"Who is grandfather?"

"Why, don't you know our grandfather? He is the oldest man about here."

"What is his name?"

"Mirko."

"Mirko?" cried Iliya, and sprang up as if he had burnt himself.

"Yes, Mirko Selakovitch. He is the oldest man here. He is more than a hundred years old."

Iliya seized the girl by the hand, his eyes lit up with longing.

"Sister, for God's sake, take me to your grandfather. Now, now, this very instant! I have been over all the world looking for him. Show me the way!"

The girl lifted her pails of water on to the yoke, and he went with her. The sun had just set and spread

out its last rays like gold. His heart beat as though it would jump out.

IX

At dusk he entered the house. A fire was merrily crackling on the hearth and its flames lit the whole room. The household was already collected.

"Good evening."

"God bless you."

"Health and peace to you."

"Thanks be to God. Sit down." A middle-aged man invited him in.

"This man has come to see grandfather," said the girl.

"Wait a little, friend, if you are not in a hurry," said the man.

"Yes, I will wait."

The women brought in the tray of food. The man turned to them and asked, "Is it ready?"

"Yes," said they.

"Wait a little, friend, I am going now." He rose and went into an inner room. Soon he returned leading an old man, whose hair was white as a fleece and whose old legs trembled with the weight of years. All had risen to their feet, and Iliya rose too. They led the grandfather to the table and sat him down. Then all the people in the house, one by one, went

up to him and took his hand. When they had all kissed they sat down at the table.

"Grandfather, a traveller is asking for you," said the middle-aged man.

"Why did you not ask him to supper?" asked the grandfather reprovingly.

"He is here, at the table."

The grandfather raised his grey eyebrows and looked with his dim eyes at Iliya, who rose.

"After supper, my son; after supper," said the grandfather.

When they had finished supper the old man turned to him: "Where are you from, my son?"

"From Ognyanovitch!"

"What do you say? What?"

"From Ognyanovitch."

The old man looked at him incredulously. "There is no such village. There is not now, though there was once. You cannot be from that village."

"But I am; I really am from Ognyanovitch."

Again the old man looked at him incredulously. "That village has long since disappeared. Even I do not remember it, but the old people told me about it who had settled here from there."

"But I am from that village!" cried Iliya almost in despair.

"How can you be? A hundred years have passed over my head. My great-grandmother used to tell

me how her husband's great-grandfather was a handsome youth, who one night suddenly disappeared. He loved, she said, one of his comrades, and was made his brother in the church. One day, this brother went into the forest for wood, and was murdered. And when the other one married, he actually invited his dead brother to be his best man. No one reproached him for wanting to raise a dead man from the grave, but when the day of the wedding came the dead man actually came and was best man. A week later the other went to look for his brother, and never came back again."

"And what became of his family?" asked Iliya, trembling all over.

"What should happen? They died. I am the seventh generation from him who disappeared. How can you know about that village! Do not talk nonsense."

The house whirled round Iliya's head. He seized his head with both his hands and fled.

Soft is the touch of the old fairy-tale! Tender are the memories of childhood when we were rocked to sleep with those sweet old stories!

THE END